

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S  
POETICAL WORKS

VOL. II.



*Mayou Flint*

*Elizabeth Barrett Moulton-Barrett.*  
*in early youth.*

THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

*IN SIX VOLUMES*

VOL. II

LONDON  
SMITH, ELDER, & CO, 15 WATERLOO PLACE  
1890

# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET . . . . .	3
ISOBEL'S CHILD . . . . .	15
THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE . . . . .	40
THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY	
FIRST PART . . . . .	57
SECOND PART . . . . .	63
THIRD PART . . . . .	72
FOURTH PART . . . . .	80
A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES . . . . .	83
RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY . . . . .	94
THE RHYME . . . . .	96
THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST . . . . .	132
BERTHA IN THE LANE . . . . .	138
LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP . . . . .	150
THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT . . . . .	192
THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN . . . . .	205
A CHILD ASLEEP . . . . .	213
THE FOURFOLD ASPECT . . . . .	217



	PAGE
NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.	
NIGHT . . . . .	223
THE MERRY MAN . . . . .	224
EARTH AND HER PRAISERS . . . . .	229
THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS . . . . .	239
AN ISLAND . . . . .	248
THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING . . . . .	259
TO BETTINE, THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE . . . . .	270
MAN AND NATURE . . . . .	274
A SEA-SIDE WALK . . . . .	276
THE SEA-MEW . . . . .	278
FELICIA HEMANS TO L. E. L. . . . .	281
L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION . . . . .	284

# POEMS



# *THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.*

Can my affections find out nothing best,  
But still and still remove?

QUARLES.

## I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf  
The yew-tree leaf will suit :  
But when its shade is o'er you laid,  
Turn round and pluck the fruit.  
Now reach my harp from off the wall  
Where shines the sun aslant ;  
The sun may shine and we be cold !  
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,  
Unto my wild romaunt.  
Margret, Margret.

## II

Sitteth the fair ladye  
Close to the river side  
Which runneth on with a merry tone  
Her merry thoughts to guide :

It runneth through the trees,  
It runneth by the hill,  
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found  
A way more pleasant still  
Margret, Margret

## III.

The night is in her hair  
And giveth shade to shade,  
And the pale moonlight on her forehead white  
Like a spirit's hand is laid,  
Her lips part with a smile  
Instead of speakings done :  
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,  
Albeit uttering none.  
Margret, Margret.

## IV.

All little birds do sit  
With heads beneath their wings .  
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,  
Absorbed from her living things :  
That dream by that ladye  
Is certes unpartook,  
For she looketh to the high cold stars  
With a tender human look  
Margret, Margret.

## V.

The lady's shadow lies  
    Upon the running river ;  
It lieth no less in its quietness,  
    For that which resteth never :  
Most like a trusting heart  
    Upon a passing faith,  
Or as upon the course of life  
    The steadfast doom of death.  
                                    Margret, Margret.

## VI.

The lady doth not move,  
    The lady doth not dream,  
Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid  
    In rest upon the stream :  
It shaketh without wind,  
    It parteth from the tide,  
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,  
    It sitteth at her side.  
                                    Margret, Margret.

## VII.

Look in its face, ladye,  
    And keep thee from thy swound ,

With a spirit bold thy pulses hold  
And hear its voice's sound .  
For so will sound thy voice  
When thy face is to the wall,  
And such will be thy face, ladye,  
When the maidens work thy pall.  
Margret, Margret

## VIII.

“Am I not like to thee?”  
The voice was calm and low,  
And between each word you might have heard  
The silent forests grow ;  
“*The like may sway the like ,*”  
By which mysterious law  
Mine eyes from thine and my lips from thine  
The light and breath may draw  
Margret, Margret.

## IX.

“My lips do need thy breath,  
My lips do need thy smile,  
And my pallid eyne, that light in thine  
Which met the stars erewhile :  
Yet go with light and life  
If that thou lovest one

In all the earth who loveth thee  
As truly as the sun,  
Margret, Margret."

## X.

Her cheek had waxèd white  
Like cloud at fall of snow ;  
Then like to one at set of sun,  
It waxèd red alsò ;  
For love's name maketh bold  
As if the loved were near :  
And then she sighed the deep long sigh  
Which cometh after fear.  
Margret, Margret.

## XI.

" Now, sooth, I fear thee not—  
Shall never fear thee now !"  
(And a noble sight was the sudden light  
Which lit her lifted brow )  
" Can earth be dry of streams,  
Or hearts of love ?" she said ;  
" Who doubteth love, can know not love :  
He is already dead."  
Margret, Margret.



## XII.

“I have” . . . and here her lips  
Some word in pause did keep,  
And gave the while a quiet smile  
As if they paused in sleep,—  
“I have . . . a brother dear,  
A knight of knightly fame !  
I broidered him a knightly scarf  
With letters of my name  
Margret, Margret.

## XIII.

“I fed his grey goshawk,  
I kissed his fierce bloodhound,  
I sate at home when he might come  
And caught his horn’s far sound :  
I sang him hunter’s songs,  
I poured him the red wine,  
He looked across the cup and said,  
*I love thee, sister mine*”  
Margret, Margret.

## XIV

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter ;

The sounding river which rolled, for ever  
    Stood dumb and stagnant after :  
    “ Brave knight thy brother is !  
    But better loveth he  
Thy chaliced wine than thy chaunted song,  
    And better both than thee,  
                                Margret, Margret.”

## XV

The lady did not heed  
    The river's silence while  
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,  
    And calm was still her smile.  
    “ My little sister wears  
    The look our mother wore ·  
I smooth her locks with a golden comb,  
    I bless her evermore.”  
                                Margret, Margret.

## XVI

“ I gave her my first bird  
    When first my voice it knew ;  
I made her share my posies rare  
    And told her where they grew :  
I taught her God's dear name  
    With prayer and praise to tell,

She looked from heaven into my face  
And said, *I love thee well.*"

Margret, Margret.

## XVII.

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
You could see each bird as it woke and stared  
Through the shrivelled foliage after.  
"Fair child thy sister is '  
But better loveth she  
Thy golden comb than thy gathered flowers,  
And better both than thee,  
Margret, Margret."

## XVIII.

Thy lady did not heed  
The withering on the bough;  
Still calm her smile albeit the while  
A little pale her brow:  
"I have a father old,  
The lord of ancient halls;  
An hundred friends are in his court  
Yet only me he calls.  
Margret, Margret.

## XIX.

“An hundied knights are in his court  
Yet read I by his knee ;  
And when foith they go to the tourney-show  
I rise not up to see :  
’T is a weary book to read,  
My tryst’s at set of sun,  
But loving and dear beneath the stars  
Is his blessing when I’ve done.”  
Margret, Margret.

## XX.

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter ;  
And moon and star though bright and far  
Did shrink and darken after.  
“High lord thy father is !  
But better loveth he  
His ancient halls than his hundred friends,  
His ancient halls, than thee,  
Margret, Margret.”

## XXI.

The lady did not heed  
That the far stars did fail ;

Still calm her smile, albeit the while . .

Nay, but she is not pale !

“I have more than a friend

Across the mountains dim .

No other's voice is soft to me,

Unless it nameth *him*.”

Margret, Margret.

XXII.

“Though louder beats my heart,

I know his tread again,

And his fair plume aye, unless turned away,

For the tears do blind me then :

We brake no gold, a sign

Of stronger faith to be,

But I wear his last look in my soul,

Which said, *I love but thee !*”

Margret, Margret.

XXIII.

IT trembled on the grass

With a low, shadowy laughter ;

And the wind did toll, as a passing soul

Were sped by church-bell after ;

And shadows, 'stead of light,

Fell from the stars above,

In flakes of darkness on her face  
Still bright with trusting love  
Margret, Margret.

## XXIV.

“He *loved* but only thee !  
That love is transient too.  
The wild hawk’s bill doth dabble still  
I’ the mouth that vowed thee true :  
Will he open his dull eyes  
When tears fall on his brow ?  
Behold, the death-worm to his heart  
Is a nearer thing than *thou*,  
Margret, Margret.”

## XXV.

Her face was on the ground—  
None saw the agony ;  
But the men at sea did that night agree  
They heard a drowning cry .  
And when the morning brake,  
Fast rolled the river’s tide,  
With the green trees waving overhead  
And a white corse laid beside.  
Margret, Margret.

## XXVI.

A knight's bloodhound and he  
The funeral watch did keep ;  
With a thought o' the chase he stroked its face  
As it howled to see him weep.  
A fair child kissed the dead,  
But shrank before its cold.  
And alone yet proudly in his hall  
Did stand a baron old  
Margret, Margret.

## XXVII.

Hang up my harp again !  
I have no voice for song  
Not song but wail, and mourners pale,  
Not bards, to love belong.  
O failing human love !  
O light, by darkness known !  
O false, the while thou treadest earth !  
O deaf beneath the stone !  
Margret, Margret.

*ISOBEL'S CHILD.*

—so find we profit,  
By losing of our prayers.

SHAKESPEARE.

## I.

To rest the weary nurse has gone :  
An eight-day watch had watchèd she,  
Still rocking beneath sun and moon  
The baby on her knee,  
Till Isobel its mother said  
“The fever waneth—wend to bed,  
For now the watch comes round to me.”

## II.

Then wearily the nurse did throw  
Her pallet in the darkest place  
Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed :  
For, as the gusty wind did blow  
The night-lamp's flare across her face,  
She saw or seemed to see, but dreamed,  
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,



The seven tall poplars on the hill,  
Did clasp the setting sun until  
His rays dropped from him, pined and still  
    As blossoms in frost,  
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,  
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass  
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.  
The poplars held the sun, and he  
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see  
—Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,  
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be  
Too chill, and lay too heavily

## III.

She only dreamed ; for all the while  
    'T was Lady Isobel that kept  
    The little baby : and it slept  
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,  
Laden with love's dewy weight,  
And red as rose of Harpocrate  
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed  
Lashes to cheek in a sealed rest.

## IV.

And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled.  
 Against the lattice, dull and wild  
 Drive the heavy droning drops,  
     Drop by drop, the sound being one ;  
 As momentarily time's segments fall  
 On the ear of God, who hears through all  
     Eternity's unbroken monotone .  
 And more and more smiled Isobel  
 To see the baby sleep so well—  
 She knew not that she smiled.  
 The wind in intermission stops  
     Down in the beechen forest,  
         Then cries aloud  
     As one at the sorest,  
         Self-stung, self-driven,  
 And rises up to its very tops,  
 Stiffening erect the branches bowed,  
     Dilating with a tempest-soul  
 The trees that with their dark hands break  
 Through their own outline, and heavy roll  
     Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven  
         Across the castle lake  
 And more and more smiled Isobel  
 To see the baby sleep so well ;  
 She knew not that she smiled ;  
 She knew not that the storm was wild ;

Through the uproar drear she could not hear  
The castle clock which struck anear—  
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

## v.

O sight for wondering look!  
While the external nature broke  
Into such abandonment,  
While the very mist, heart-rent  
By the lightning, seemed to eddy  
Against nature, with a din,—  
A sense of silence and of steady  
Natural calm appeared to come  
From things without, and enter in  
The human creature's room.

## vi.

So motionless she sate,  
The babe asleep upon her knees,  
You might have dreamed their souls had gone  
Away to things inanimate,  
In such to live, in such to moan ;  
And that their bodies had ta'en back,  
In mystic change, all silences  
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,

Or dwell beneath the reedy ground  
In waters safe from their own sound :

Only she wore  
The deepening smile I named before,  
And *that* a deepening love expressed ;  
And who at once can love and rest ?

VII.

In sooth the smile that then was keeping  
Watch upon the baby sleeping,

Floated with its tender light  
Downward, from the drooping eyes,  
Upward, from the lips apart,

Over cheeks which had grown white  
With an eight-day weeping :  
All smiles come in such a wise

Where tears shall fall or have of old—  
Like northern lights that fill the heart  
Of heaven in sign of cold

VIII

Motionless she sate.  
Her hair had fallen by its weight  
On each side of her smile and lay  
Very blackly on the arm

Where the baby nestled warm,  
Pale as baby carved in stone  
Seen by glimpses of the moon  
Up a dark cathedral aisle ·  
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell  
Upon the child of Isobel—  
Perhaps you saw it by the ray  
Alone of her still smile.

## IX.

A solemn thing it is to me  
To look upon a babe that sleeps  
Wearing in its spirit-deeps  
The undeveloped mystery  
Of our Adam's taint and woe,  
Which, when they developed be,  
Will not let it slumber so ,  
Lying new in life beneath  
The shadow of the coming death,  
With that soft, low, quiet breath,  
As if it felt the sun ;  
Knowing all things by their 'blooms,  
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky  
Only by the warmth that comes  
Out of each, earth only by  
The pleasant hues that o'er it run,

And human love by drops of sweet  
     White nourishment still hanging round  
     The little mouth so slumber-bound :  
 All which broken sentiency  
 And conclusion incomplete,  
     Will gather and unite and climb  
 To an immortality  
     Good or evil, each sublime,  
 Through life and death to life again  
     O little lids, now folded fast,  
     Must ye learn to drop at last  
     Our large and burning tears ?  
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,  
 When the time comes round to die,  
     Still from all the whirl of years,  
 Bare of all the joy and pain ?  
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand  
 At God's right hand,  
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes  
 Dilated by great destinies,  
 To an endless waking ? thrones and seraphim.  
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,  
 Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,  
     But thine alone on Him ?  
 Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place,  
 (God keep thy will !) feel thine own energies

Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,  
The sleepless deathless life within thee grasp,—  
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,  
With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere  
And overcome thee with thine own despair ?

## X.

More soft, less solemn images  
Drifted o'er the lady's heart  
    Silently as snow.  
She had seen eight days depart  
Hour by hour, on bended knees,  
    With pale-wrung hands and prayings low  
And broken, through which came the sound  
Of tears that fell against the ground,  
Making sad stops.—“Dear Lord, dear Lord !”  
She still had prayed, (the heavenly word  
Broken by an earthly sigh)  
—“Thou who didst not erst deny  
The mother-joy to Mary mild,  
Blessèd in the blessèd child  
Which hearkened in meek babyhood  
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used  
To all that music interfused  
In breasts of angels high and good !  
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—

Oh, take not to thy songful heaven  
 The pretty baby thou hast given,  
 Or ere that I have seen him play  
 Around his father's knees and known  
 That *he* knew how my love has gone  
 From all the world to him.  
 Think, God among the cherubim,  
 How I shall shiver every day  
 In thy June sunshine, knowing where  
 The grave-grass keeps it from his fair  
 Still cheeks and feel, at every tread,  
 His little body, which is dead  
 And hidden in thy turfy fold,  
 Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold !  
 O God, I am so young, so young—

I am not used to tears at nights  
 Instead of slumber—not to prayer  
 With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung !  
 Thou knowest all my prayings were

‘I bless thee, God, for past delights—  
 Thank God !’ I am not used to bear  
 Hard thoughts of death ; the earth doth cover  
 No face from me of friend or lover :  
 And must the first who teaches me  
 The form of shrouds and funerals, be  
 Mine own first-born beloved ? he



Who taught me first this mother-love ?  
Dear Lord who spreadest out above  
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet  
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—  
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart  
Thou madest tender ! Thou who art  
So happy in thy heaven alway,  
Take not mine only bliss away ! ”

## XI

She so had prayed and God, who hears  
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears  
From that belovèd babe had ta'en  
The fever and the beating pain  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well,  
    ( She knew not that she smiled, I wis )  
Until the pleasant gradual thought  
Which near her heart the smile enwrought,  
Now soft and slow, itself did seem  
To float along a happy dream,  
    Beyond it into speech like this.

## XII.

“ I prayed for thee, my little child,  
And God has heard my prayer ! ”

And when thy babyhood is gone,  
 We two together undefiled  
 By men's repinings, will kneel down  
     Upon His earth which will be fair  
 (Not covering thee, sweet !) to us twain,  
     And give Him thankful praise."

XIII.

Dully and wildly drives the rain :  
 Against the lattices drives the rain.

XIV.

"I thank Him now, that I can think  
     Of those same future days,  
 Nor from the harmless image shrink  
     Of what I there might see—  
 Strange babies on their mothers' knee,  
 Whose innocent soft faces might  
 From off mine eyelids strike the light,  
     With looks not meant for me !"

XV.

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,  
 As against the lattices drives the rain.

## XVI

“ But now, O baby mine, together,  
We turn this hope of ours again  
To many an hour of summer weather,  
When we shall sit and intertwine  
Our spirits, and instruct each other  
In the pure loves of child and mother !  
Two human loves make one divine.”

## XVII.

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,  
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

## XVIII.

“ My little child, what wilt thou choose ?  
Now let me look at thee and ponder.  
What gladness, from the gladnesses  
Futurity is spreading under  
Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees  
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose  
Thy spirit with the river seen  
Intermittently between  
The winding beechen alleys,—  
Half in labour, half repose,  
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,

Thou, with only thoughts to keep  
Which never a bound will overpass,  
And which are innocent as those  
That feed among Arcadian valleys  
Upon the dewy grass?"

XIX.

The large white owl that with age is blind,  
That hath sate for years in the old tree hollow,  
Is carried away in a gust of wind ;  
His wings could bear him not as fast  
As he goeth now the lattice past ;  
He is borne by the winds, the rains do follow  
His white wings to the blast outflowing,  
He hooteth in going,  
And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter  
His round unblinking eyes

XX

"Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter  
To be eloquent and wise,  
One upon whose lips the air  
Turns to solemn verities  
For men to breathe anew, and win  
A deeper-seated life within?"

Wilt be a philosopher,  
By whose voice the earth and skies  
Shall speak to the unborn ?  
Or a poet, broadly spreading  
The golden immortalities  
Of thy soul on nature's lorn  
And pool of such, them all to guard  
From their decay,—beneath thy treading,  
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden,—  
And stars, drawn downward by thy looks,  
To shine ascendant in thy books ?”

## XXI

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,  
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet  
Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet !  
And at the lady's door the hound  
Scratches with a crying sound.

## XXII.

“But, O my babe, thy lids are laid  
Close, fast upon thy cheek,  
And not a dream of power and sheen  
Can make a passage up between ;  
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,  
Thy looks are very meek,

And it will be their chosen place  
 To rest on some beloved face,  
     As these on thine, and let the noise  
 Of the whole world go on nor drown  
     The tender silence of thy joys ·  
 Or when that silence shall have grown  
     Too tender for itself, the same  
 Yearning for sound,—to look above  
 And utter its one meaning, LOVE,  
     That *He* may hear *His* name."

XXIII.

No wind, no rain, no thunder !  
 The waters had trickled not slowly,  
 The thunder was not spent  
 Nor the wind near finishing ,  
 Who would have said that the storm was  
     diminishing ?  
 No wind, no rain, no thunder !  
 Their noises dropped asunder  
 From the earth and the firmament,  
 From the towers and the lattices,  
 Abrupt and echoless  
 As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken wholly  
     As life in death.  
 And sudden and solemn the silence fell,

Startling the heart of Isobel

As the tempest could not :

Against the door went panting the breath

Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,

And she, constrained howe'er she would not,

Lifted her eyes and saw the moon

Looking out of heaven alone

Upon the poplared hill,—

A calm of God, made visible

That men might bless it at their will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face

Falleth clear and cold :

The mother's looks have fallen back

To the same place :

Because no moon with silver rack,

Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies

Has power to hold

Our loving eyes,

Which still revert, as ever must

Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

XXV.

The moonshine on the baby's face

Cold and clear remaineth ,

The mother's looks do shrink away,—  
The mother's looks return to stay,  
    As charmed by what paineth :  
Is any glamour in the case ?  
    Is it dream, or is it sight ?  
Hath the change upon the wild  
    Elements that sign the night,  
Passed upon the child ?  
    It is not dream, but sight.

## XXVI

The babe has awakened from sleep  
    And unto the gaze of its mother,  
    Bent over it, lifted another—  
    Not the baby-looks that go  
    Unaimingly to and fro,  
But an earnest gazing deep  
Such as soul gives soul at length  
    When by work and wail of years  
It winneth a solemn strength  
    And mourneth as it wears.  
A strong man could not brook,  
    With pulse unhurried by fears,  
To meet that baby's look  
    O'erglazed by manhood's tears,  
The tears of a man full grown,



With a power to wring our own,  
In the eyes all undefiled  
Of a little three-months' child—  
To see that babe-brow wrought  
By the witnessing of thought  
    To judgment's prodigy,  
And the small soft mouth unweaned,  
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,  
(Putting the sound of loving  
Where no sound else was moving  
    Except the speechless cry)  
Quickened to mind's expression,  
Shaped to articulation,  
Yea, uttering words, yea, naming woe,  
    In tones that with it strangely went  
    Because so baby-innocent,  
As the child spake out to the mother, so —

## XXVII.

“O mother, mother, loose thy prayer !  
    Christ's name hath made it strong.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
With its most loving cruelty,  
    From floating my new soul along  
    The happy heavenly air.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me

In all this dark, upon this dull  
Low earth, by only weepers trod.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me !

Mine angel looketh sorrowful  
Upon the face of God.\*

XXVIII.

“Mother, mother, can I dream  
Beneath your earthly trees?  
I had a vision and a gleam,  
I heard a sound more sweet than these  
When rippled by the wind ·  
Did you see the Dove with wings  
Bathed in golden glisterings  
From a sunless light behind,  
Dropping on me from the sky,  
Soft as mother's kiss, until  
I seemed to leap and yet was still?  
Saw you how His love-large eye  
Looked upon me mystic calms,  
Till the power of His divine  
Vision was indrawn to mine?

For I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold  
the face of my Father which is in Heaven — *Matt.* xviii. 10.

## XXIX.

“ Oh, the dream within the dream !  
    I saw celestial places even.  
Oh, the vistas of high palms  
    Making finites of delight  
    Through the heavenly infinite,  
Lifting up their green still tops  
    To the heaven of heaven !  
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops  
Shade like light across the river  
Glorified in its for-ever  
    Flowing from the Throne !  
Oh, the shining holinesses  
Of the thousand, thousand faces  
    God-sunned by the thronèd ONE,  
And made intense with such a love  
That, though I saw them turned above,  
Each loving seemed for also me !  
And, oh, the Unspeakable, the HE,  
The manifest in secrecies  
    Yet of mine own heart partaker  
With the overcoming look  
Of One who hath been once forsook  
    And blesseth the forsaker !  
Mother, mother, let me go

Toward the Face that looketh so !  
 Through the mystic wingèd Four  
 Whose are inward, outward eyes  
 Dark with light of mysteries  
 And the restless evermore  
 'Holy, holy, holy,'—through  
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view  
 Of cherubim and seraphim,—  
 Through the four-and-twenty crowned  
 Stately elders white around,  
 Suffer me to go to Him !

XXX.

"Is your wisdom very wise,  
 Mother, on the narrow earth,  
 Very happy, very worth  
 That I should stay to learn?  
 Are these air-corrupting sighs  
 Fashioned by unlearnèd breath?  
 Do the students' lamps that burn  
 All night, illumine death?  
 Mother, albeit this be so,  
 Loose thy prayer and let me go  
 Where that bright chief angel stands  
 Apart from all his brother bands,

Too glad for smiling, having bent  
In angelic wilderment  
O'er the depths of God, and brought  
Reeling thence one only thought  
To fill his own eternity.  
He the teacher is for me—  
He can teach what I would know—  
Mother, mother, let me go !

## XXXI.

“Can your poet make an Eden  
No winter will undo,  
And light a starry fire while heeding  
His hearth's is burning too ?  
Drown in music the earth's din,  
And keep his own wild soul within  
The law of his own harmony ?  
Mother, albeit this be so,  
Let me to my heaven go !  
A little harp me waits thereby,  
A harp whose strings are golden all  
And tuned to music spherical,  
Hanging on the green life-tree  
Where no willows ever be.  
Shall I miss that harp of mine ?

Mother, no !—the Eye divine  
 Turned upon it, makes it shine ;  
 And when I touch it, poems sweet  
 Like separate souls shall fly from it,  
 Each to the immortal fyttē.  
 We shall all be poets there,  
 Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

XXXII.

“Love ! earth’s love ! and *can* we love  
 Fixedly where all things move ?  
 Can the sinning love each other ?

    Mother, mother,  
 I tremble in thy close embrace,  
 I feel thy tears adown my face,  
 Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—  
 O dreary earthly love !  
 Loose thy prayer and let me go  
 To the place which loving is  
 Yet not sad ; and when is given  
 Escape to *thee* from this below,  
 Thou shalt behold me that I wait  
 For thee beside the happy Gate,  
 And silence shall be up in heaven  
 To hear our greeting kiss.”

## XXXIII.

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,  
And starts to see beside her bed  
The lady with a grandeur spread  
Like pathos o'er her face, as one  
God-satisfied and earth-undone ;  
The babe upon her arm was dead :  
And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—  
She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

## XXXIV.

“Wake, nurse !” the lady said ;  
“*We* are waking—he and I—  
I, on earth, and he, in sky :  
And thou must help me to o'erlay  
With garment white this little clay  
Which needs no more our lullaby.

## XXXV.

“I changed the cruel prayer I made,  
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed  
That God would do His will ; and thus  
He did it, nurse ! He parted us :  
And His sun shows victorious  
The dead calm face,—and *I* am calm,  
And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

XXXVI.

“This earthly noise is too anear,  
Too loud, and will not let me hear  
The little harp. My death will soon  
Make silence.”

And a sense of tune,  
A satisfied love meanwhile  
Which nothing earthly could despoil,  
Sang on within her soul.

XXXVII.

Oh you,  
Earth's tender and impassioned few,  
Take courage to entrust your love  
To Him so named who guards above  
Its ends and shall fulfil  
Breaking the narrow prayers that may  
Befit your narrow hearts, away  
In His broad, loving will.



## *THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.*

### I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds  
 And a young page at his side,  
 From the holy war in Palestine  
 Did slow and thoughtful ride,  
 As each were a palmer and told for beads  
 The dew of the eventide.

### II.

“O young page,” said the knight,  
 “A noble page art thou !  
 Thou fearest not to steep in blood  
 The curls upon thy brow ;  
 And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,  
 Didst ward me a mortal blow.”

### III

“O brave knight,” said the page,  
 “Or ere we hither came,  
 We talked in tent, we talked in field,

Of the bloody battle-game ;  
But here, below this greenwood bough,  
I cannot speak the same.

## IV.

“ Our troop is far behind,  
The woodland calm is new ;  
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,  
Tread deep the shadows through ;  
And, in my mind, some blessing kind  
Is dropping with the dew.

## V.

“ The woodland calm is pure—  
I cannot choose but have  
A thought from these, o’ the beechen-trees,  
Which in our England wave,  
And of the little finches fine  
Which sang there while in Palestine  
The warrior-hilt we drave.

## VI.

“ Methinks, a moment gone,  
I heard my mother pray !  
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me

Wherein she passed away ;  
And I know the heavens are leaning down  
To hear what I shall say."

## VII.

The page spake calm and high,  
As of no mean degree ;  
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad  
Full heart, his own was free :  
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,  
Then answered smilingly—

## VIII.

"Sir page, I pray your grace !  
Certes, I meant not so  
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,  
With the crook of the battle-bow ;  
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,  
I ween, in any mood or place,  
If the grasses die or grow.

## IX.

And this I meant to say—  
My lady's face shall shine  
As ladies' faces use, to greet

My page from Palestine;  
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,  
She is no lady of mine.

## X.

“And this I meant to fear—  
Her bower may suit thee ill;  
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,  
Thy *talk* was somewhat still:  
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear  
Than thy tongue for my lady’s will !”

## XI.

Slowly and thankfully  
The young page bowed his head;  
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,  
Until he blushed instead,  
And no lady in her bower, *pardîe*,  
Could blush more sudden red:  
“Sir Knight,—thy lady’s bower to me  
Is suited well,” he said.

## XII.

*Beati, beati, mortui!*  
From the convent on the sea,  
One mile off, or scarce so nigh,  
Swells the dirge as clear and high

As if that, over brake and lea,  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of Saint Mary,  
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,  
And the lady Abbess dead before it,  
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek  
Her voice did charge and bless,—  
Chanting steady, chanting meek,  
Chanting with a solemn breath,  
Because that they are thinking less  
Upon the dead than upon death.

*Beati, beati, mortui!*

Now the vision in the sound  
Wheelet on the wind around ;  
Now it sweepeth back, away—  
The uplands will not let it stay  
To dark the western sun :

*Mortui!*—away at last,—

Or ere the page's blush is past !

And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

### XIII.

“A boon, thou noble knight,  
If ever I servèd thee !

Though thou art a knight and I am a page,  
Now grant a boon to me ,

And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,  
If little loved or loved aright  
Be the face of thy ladye."

## XIV.

Gloomily looked the knight—  
"As a son thou hast servèd me,  
And would to none I had granted boon  
Except to only thee!  
For haply then I should love aright,  
For then I should know if dark or bright  
Were the face of my ladye.

## XV.

"Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue  
To grudge that granted boon,  
That heavy price from heart and life  
I paid in silence down;  
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine  
My father's fame: I swear by mine,  
That price was nobly won!"

## XVI.

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,  
He was my father's friend,  
And while I rode the lists at court  
And little guessed the end,

My noble father in his shroud  
Against a slanderer lying loud,  
He rose up to defend.

## XVII.

“Oh, calm below the marble grey  
My father’s dust was strown !  
Oh, meek above the marble grey  
His image prayed alone !  
The slanderer lied · the wretch was brave—  
For, looking up the minster-nave,  
He saw my father’s knightly glaive  
Was changed from steel to stone.

## XVIII.

“Earl Walter’s glaive was steel,  
With a brave old hand to wear it,  
And dashed the lie back in the mouth  
Which lied against the godly truth  
And against the knightly merit  
The slanderer, ’neath the avenger’s heel,  
Struck up the dagger in appeal  
From stealthy lie to brutal force—  
And out upon the traitor’s corse  
Was yielded the true spirit.

## XIX.

“I would mine hand had fought that fight  
And justified my father !  
I would mine heart had caught that wound  
And slept beside him rather !  
I think it were a better thing  
Than murdered friend and marriage-ring  
Forced on my life together.

## XX

“Wail shook Earl Walter’s house ;  
‘ His true wife shed no tear ;  
She lay upon her bed as mute  
As the earl did on his bier :  
Till—‘ Ride, ride fast,’ she said at last,  
‘ And bring the avengèd’s son anear !  
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,  
For white of blee with waiting for me  
Is the corse in the next chambère.’

## XXI.

“I came, I knelt beside her bed ;  
Her calm was worse than strife :  
‘ My husband, for thy father dear,  
Gave freely when thou wast not here



His own and eke my life.  
A boon ! Of that sweet child we make  
An orphan for thy father's sake,  
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

## XXII

"I said, ' My steed neighs in the court,  
My bark rocks on the brine,  
And the warrior's vow I am under now  
To free the pilgrim's shrine ;  
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest  
And call that daughter of thine,  
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde  
While I am in Palestine.'

## XXIII.

"In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,  
Ye wis, I could not see,  
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest  
fast prayed,  
And wedded fast were we.  
Her mother smiled upon her bed  
As at its side we knelt to wed,  
And the bride rose from her knee  
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,  
Or ever she kissed me.

## XXIV.

“ My page, my page, what grieves thee so,  
That the tears run down thy face ? ”—

“ Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr

Was in thy lady’s case :

But *she* laid down the silks she wore

And followed him she wed before,

Disguised as his true servitor,

To the very battle-place.”

## XXV

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,

A careless laugh laughed he

“ Well done it were for thy sistèr,

But not for my ladye !

My love, so please you, shall requite

No woman, whether dark or bright,

Unwomaned if she be.”

## XXVI

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold—

“ Your wisdom may declare

That womanhood is proved the best

By golden brooch and glossy vest

The mincing ladies wear ,  
Yet is it proved, and was of old,  
Anear as well, I dare to hold,  
By truth, or by despair."

## XXVII.

He smiled no more, he wept no more,  
But passionate he spake—  
"Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,  
When none beside did wake !  
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,  
For one belovèd's sake !—  
And her little hand, defiled with blood,  
Her tender tears of womanhood  
Most woman-pure did make !"

## XXVIII.

—"Well done it were for thy sistèr,  
Thou tellest well her tale !  
But for my lady, she shall pray  
I' the kirk of Nydesdale.  
Not dread for me but love for me  
Shall make my lady pale ,  
No casque shall hide her woman's tear—  
It shall have room to trickle clear  
Behind her woman's veil."

## XXIX

—“ But what if she mistook thy mind  
And followed thee to strife,  
Then kneeling did entreat thy love  
As Paynims ask for life ? ”  
—“ I would forgive, and evermore  
Would love her as my servitor,  
But little as my wife

## XXX.

“ Look up—there is a small bright cloud  
Alone amid the skies !  
So high, so pure, and so apart,  
A woman’s honour lies ”  
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—  
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,  
Betwixt it and his eyes

## XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away  
From welkin unto hill—  
Ha ! who rides there ?—the page is ‘waie,  
Though the cry at his heart is still  
And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,  
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,  
And the Saracens ride at will.

## XXXII

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—

“ Ride fast, my master, ride,

Or ere within the broadening dark

The narrow shadows hide.”

“ Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,

And keep thou at my side.”

## XXXIII.

“ Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,

Thy faithful page precede.

For I must loose on saddle-bow

My battle-casque that galls, I trow,

The shoulder of my steed ;

And I must play, as I did vow,

For one in bitter need.

## XXXIV.

“ Ere night I shall be near to thee,—

Now ride, my master, ride !

Ere night, as parted spirits cleave

To mortals too beloved to leave,

I shall be at thy side ”

The knight smiled free at the fantasy,

And adown the dell did ride

## XXXV.

'Had the knight looked up to the page's face,  
No smile the word had won,  
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,  
I ween he had never gone :  
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,  
I ween he had turned anon,  
For dread was the woe in the face so young.  
And wild was the silent geste that flung  
Casque, sword to earth, as the boy down-sprung  
And stood—alone, alone.

## XXXVI.

He clenched his hands as if to hold  
His soul's great agony—  
“Have I renounced my womanhood,  
For wifhood unto *thee*,  
And is this the last, last look of thine  
That ever I shall see ?

## XXXVII.

“Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have  
A lady to thy mind,  
More woman-proud and half as true  
As one thou leav'st behind !

And God me take with HIM to dwell—  
For HIM I cannot love too well,  
As I have loved my kind.”

## XXXVIII.

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,  
The hopeful heavens to seek,  
That little cloud still floateth there,  
Whereof her loved did speak :  
How bright the little cloud appears !  
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,  
And the tears down either cheek

## XXXIX.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—  
The Paynims round her coming !  
The sound and sight have made her calm,—  
False page, but truthful woman ;  
She stands amid them all unmoved .  
A heart once broken by the loved  
Is strong to meet the foeman.

## XL.

“ Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,  
From pouring wine-cups resting ? ”—  
“ I keep my master's noble name,  
For warring, not for feasting ;

And if that here Sir Hubert were,  
My master brave, my master dear,  
Ye would not stay the questing ”

## XLI.

“Where is thy master, scornful page,  
That we may slay or bind him ?”—  
“Now search the lea and search the wood,  
And see if ye can find him !  
Nathless, as hath been often tried,  
Your Paynim heroes faster ride  
Before him than behind him.”

## XLII.

“Give smother answers, lying page,  
Or perish in the lying !”—  
“I trow that if the warrior brand  
Beside my foot, were in my hand,  
’T were better at replying !”  
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,  
They cleft her golden ringlets through ;  
The Loving is the Dying.

## XLIII.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,  
And met it from beneath  
With smile more bright in victory



Than any sword from sheath,—  
Which flashed across her lip serene,  
Most like the spirit-light between  
The darks of life and death.

## XLIV.

*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*

From the convent on the sea,  
Now it sweepeth solemnly,  
As over wood and over lea  
Bodily the wind did carry  
The great altar of St Mary,  
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,  
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,  
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly  
Beat along their voices saintly—

*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud  
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,  
Page or lady, as we said,  
With the dews upon her head,  
All as sad if not as loud.

*Ingemisco, ingemisco !*

Is ever a lament begun  
By any mourner under sun,  
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?

*THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.*

FIRST PART

I

“ONORA, Onora,”—her mother is calling,  
 She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling  
 Drop after drop from the sycamores laden  
 With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,  
 “Night cometh, Onora.”

II.

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,  
 To the limes at the end where the green arbour is—  
 “Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found  
     her,  
 While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,  
 Night cometh—Onora !”

## III

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on  
Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done  
And the choristers sitting with faces aslant  
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—

“Onora, Onora !”

## IV

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—  
“Onora, art coming ?”—what is it she seeth ?  
Nought, nought but the grey border-stone that is wist  
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—

“My daughter !” Then over

## V

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so  
She is 'ware of her little son playing below.  
“Now where is Onora ?” He hung down his head  
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—

“At the tryst with her lover.”

## VI

But his mother was wroth : in a sternness quoth she,  
“As thou play'st at the ball art thou playing with me ?  
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,  
And the saints know above that she loveth but one  
And will ne'er wed another ?”

## VII.

Then the boy wept aloud ; 't was a fair sight yet sad  
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had  
He stamped with his foot, said—" The saints know I lied  
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide :

Must I utter it, mother ? "

## VIII.

In his vehement childhood he hurried within  
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin,  
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—  
" Oh ! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,  
At nights in the ruin—

## IX.

" The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,  
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,  
Where no singing-birds build and the trees gaunt and grey  
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—  
But is *this* the wind's doing ?

## X

" A nun in the east wall was buried alive  
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,  
And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,  
The old abbess fell backwards and swooned unto death  
With an Ave half-spoken.

## XI.

“I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,  
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground—  
A brave hound, my mother ! a brave hound, ye wot !  
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat  
In the pass of the Brocken.

## XII.

“At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there  
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer ?  
Stoop low, mother, low ! If we went there to see,  
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be  
At dawn and at even !

## XIII.

“Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even ?  
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven ?  
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*  
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary  
And a face turned from heaven ?

## XIV.

“Saint Agnes o’erwatcheth my dreams and erewhile  
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile ;  
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o’er her,  
She whispered— ‘ Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora :  
The Tempted is sinning ’ ”

## XV.

“Onora, Onora !” they heard her not coming,  
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming ;  
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor  
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,  
And a smile just beginning :

## XVI.

It touches her lips but it dares not arise  
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes,  
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry  
Sing on like the angels in separate glory  
Between clouds of amber ,

## XVII.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured till stirred  
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ,  
While—O soft !—her speaking is so interwound  
Of the dim and the sweet, ’t is a twilight of sound  
And floats through the chamber.

## XVIII.

“Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,” said she  
“I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me ,  
And I know by the hills that the battle is done,  
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,  
’Neath the eyes that behold thee.”

## XIX.

Her mother sat silent—too tender, I wis,  
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss  
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-  
wrought—

“O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought !  
If he cometh, who told thee ?”

## XX.

“I know by the hills,” she resumed calm and clear,  
“By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear :  
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu ?  
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true,  
As Saint Agnes in sleeping !”

## XXI.

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,  
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek  
She bowed down to kiss him : dear saints, did he see  
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,  
That he shrank away weeping ?

## SECOND PART.

*A bed.* ONORA, *sleeping*    Angels, *but not near.*

*First Angel.*

Must we stand so far, and she  
So very fair?

*Second Angel.*

As bodies be.

*First Angel*

And she so mild?

*Second Angel.*

As spirits when

They meeken, not to God, but men

*First Angel*

And she so young, that I who bring  
Good dreams for saintly children, might  
Mistake that small soft face to-night,  
And fetch her such a blessed thing  
That at her waking she would weep  
For childhood lost anew in sleep  
How hath she sinned?



*Second Angel.*

In bartering love ;

God's love for man's.

*First Angel.*

We may reprove

The world for this, not only her .

Let me approach to breathe away

This dust o' the heart with holy air

*Second Angel.*

Stand off ! She sleeps, and did not pray.

*First Angel.*

Did none pray for her ?

*Second Angel.*

Ay, a child,—

Who never, playing, wept before :

While, in a mother undefiled,

Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true

And pauseless as the pulses do.

*First Angel.*

Then I approach

*Second Angel.*

It is not WILLED.

*First Angel.*

One word : is she redeemed ?

*Second Angel*

No more !

The place is filled.

[Angels *vansh*

*Evil Spirit (in a Nun's garb by the bed)*

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream ! too near to  
heaven it leaned

*Onora (in sleep)*

Nay, leave me this—but only this ! 't is but a dream,  
sweet fiend !

*Evil Spirit.*

It is a *thought*

*Onora (in sleep).*

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good .  
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend ! it cannot if it  
would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,  
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the  
kirk.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream !

*Onora (in sleep).* Nay, let me dream at least.

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast  
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,  
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often  
done

*Evil Spirit*

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream !

*Onora (in sleep)* Nay, sweet fiend, let me go

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so !

For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirk-  
yard stone,

Oh, deep and straight ! oh, very straight ! they move at  
nights alone :

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth  
tenderly,

“ Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the  
fields with me ! ”

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear, that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a  
sign

*Onora (in sleep)*

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied, my word shall answer  
thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was  
praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in .

What shall I do—tread down the dew and pull the  
blossoms blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the  
rowan ?

*Evil Spirit.*

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where  
thou dost stand

Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in  
hand,

And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and  
kind,

Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on  
thy mind

*Onora (in sleep).*

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause ;  
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong, the spirits laughed  
applause :

The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a  
breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars ap-  
peared to freeze.

*Evil Spirit.*

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow  
was made.

*Onora (in sleep).*

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank  
back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear  
to die—

I wish I were a young dead child and had thy company  
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,  
And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that  
smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have sha-  
dowed twain,

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes  
the pain :

Love feareth death I was no child, I was betrothed  
that day ,

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a  
stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas ! no more  
mine own—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,  
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine  
were white in grave ?

How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a  
throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her* ! that else he loveth  
none ?

Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low  
he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he  
might take,

That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while  
very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven !) would darken  
down to *him* !

*Evil Spirit.*

Who told thee thou wast called to death ?

*Onora (in sleep)*

I sate all night beside thee ·  
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes  
to hide thee,  
And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and  
weak,  
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his  
gasping beak  
I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay  
forlorn  
Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly  
fragments torn ·  
And through the night, and through the hush, and  
over the flapping wing,  
We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels mur-  
muring  
We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the  
days to seven,  
"And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of  
heaven  
"And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,  
"For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her."

*Evil Spirit.*

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

*Onora (in sleep)*

And then I heard thee say—

"I count upon my rosary blown the hours thou hast to  
stay !

"Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,

"Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of  
thee :

"And if thou wilt forgo the sight of angels, verily

"Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what  
angels be ;

"Nor bride shall pass, save thee " . . . Alas !—my father's  
hand 's a-cold,

The meadows seem -

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told

*Onora (in sleep)*

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique  
beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the  
weeds,

This rosary brown which is thine own,—lost soul of  
buried nun !

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike  
undone,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow  
should break,

A pledge always of living days 't was hung around my  
neck—

I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father, look not so !),  
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.*

*Evil Spirit.*

And canst thou prove . . .

*Onora (in sleep).*

O love, my love ! I felt him near again !  
 I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the  
 plain !

Was this no weal for me to feel ? Is greater weal than  
 this ?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels  
 heard but *his*.

*Evil Spirit*

Well done, well done !

*Onora (in sleep)*

Ah me, the sun ! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—  
 Ah me, how dread can look the Dead ! Aroint thee,  
 father mine !

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,  
 And her breath comes in sobs, while she stares through  
 the night ;

There is nought ; the great willow, her lattice before,  
 Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor .

But her hands tremble fast as their pulses and, free  
 From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.



## THIRD PART.

## I

'T is a morn for a bridal, the merry bride-bell  
Rings clear through the green-wood that skuts the  
                  chappelle,  
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,  
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside  
                  At the work shall be doing ;

## II.

While down through the wood rides that fair company,  
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,  
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once  
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,  
                  “ And so endeth a wooing ! ”

## III

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,  
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say,  
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,  
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath  
                  When she sigheth or speaketh.

## IV.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware  
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,  
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,  
She seeth her little son stand at the door :

Is it play that he seeketh ?

## V.

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild  
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child ?  
He trembles not, weeps not ; the passion is done,  
And calmly he kneels 'in their midst, with the sun  
On his head like a glory.

## VI.

“ O fair-featured maids, ye are many ! ” he cried,  
“ But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride ?  
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many ! but whom  
For the courage and woe can ye match with the groom  
As ye see them before ye ? ”

## VII.

Out spake the bride's mother, “ The vileness is thine  
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine ! ”  
Out spake the bride's lover, “ The vileness be mine  
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine  
And the charge be unprovèd.

## VIII

“Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother ! speak it  
aloud :

Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud !”

—“O father, thou seest, for dead eyes can see,  
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY,  
O my father belovèd !”

## IX.

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal  
Both maidens and youths by the old chapel-wall .

“So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,” quoth he,  
“She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,  
Like a pure-hearted lady.”

## X.

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train ;  
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again  
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went  
Where the altar-lights burn o’er the great sacrament,  
Faint with daylight, but steady.

## XI.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,  
And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view  
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue  
As he would for another.

## XII.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white  
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,  
With a look taken up to each iris of stone  
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but  
none  
From the face of a mother.

## XIII.

"In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven  
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for heaven,  
But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,  
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her in-  
stead:  
O shrive her and wed not!"

## XIV.

In tears, the bride's mother,—“Sir priest, unto thee  
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company.”  
In wrath, the bride's lover,—“The lie shall be clear!  
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear:  
Be the charge proved or said not!”

## XV.

'Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,  
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place,—  
“Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see  
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY !

Is it used for the praying ?”

## XVI.

The youths looked aside — to laugh there were a sin—  
And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut within.  
Quoth the priest, “Thou art wild, pretty boy ! Blessed she  
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary

To a worldly arraying.”

## XVII.

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride  
And before the high altar they stood side by side ·  
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,  
They have knelt down together to rise up as one.

Who laughed by the altar ?

## XVIII.

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,  
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound ;  
And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,  
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,  
As he read from the psalter.

## XIX.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still  
He felt a power on him too strong for his will :  
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,  
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,  
Or the air could not hold it.

## XX.

“I have sinnèd,” quoth he, “I have sinnèd, I wot”—  
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought :  
They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,  
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—  
As the choristers told it.

## XXI.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done  
They, who knelt down together, arise up as one :  
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,  
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,  
No saint at her praying !

## XXII.

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide ;  
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride ;  
His lips stung her with cold ; she glanced upwardly mute .  
“Mine own wife,” he said, and fell stark at her foot  
In the word he was saying.

## XXIII.

They have lifted him up, but his head sinks away,  
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.  
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more  
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor !

Let his bride gaze upon him

## XXIV.

Long and still was her gaze while they chafed him  
there  
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed  
her,  
But when they stood up—only *they* ! with a start  
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart  
She has lived, and forgone him !

## XXV.

And low on his body she droppeth adown—  
“Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own ?  
Then take thine own with thee ! thy coldness is warm  
To the world’s cold without thee ! Come, keep me from  
harm  
In a calm of thy teaching !”

## XXVI.

She looked in his face earnest-long, as in sooth  
There were hope of an answer, and then kissed his  
mouth,  
And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—  
“Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!  
God, hear my beseeching!”

## XXVII.

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,  
She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day.  
Wild she sprang to her feet,—“I surrender to *thee*  
The broken vow's pledge, the accursed rosary,—  
I am ready for dying!”

## XXVIII

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground  
Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound  
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—  
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn  
And moaned in the trying.



## FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk.

“I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk

I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro,

Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below

All things are the same, but I,—only I am dreary,

And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary

“Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring

And smiled to think I should smile more upon their  
gathering

The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them,  
dearest mine,

And carry them and carry me before Saint Agnes’ shrine”

—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted  
in the spring,

And her and them all mournfully to Agnes’ shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook her  
head—

“The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,” she  
said.

“The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,  
For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn  
away,

Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze  
On God’s or angel’s holiness, except in Jesu’s face.”

She spoke with passion after pause—“And were it wisely  
done

If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?  
If we whose virtue is so weak should have a will so strong,  
And stand blind on the rocks to choose the right path  
from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and  
heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose-tree which beareth seven times  
seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the  
breast,—

Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best ! ”

Then breaking into tears,—“Dear God,” she cried, “and  
must we see

All blissful things depart from us or ere we go to THEE?  
We cannot guess Thee in the wood or hear Thee in the  
wind?

Our cedars must fall round us ere we see the light behind?

Ay sooth, we feel too strong, in weal, to need thee on  
that road,

But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not on  
‘God.’ ”

Her mother could not speak for tears ; she ever musèd  
thus,

“ *The bees will find out other flowers,—but what is left for  
us ?* ”

But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside  
her knee,

—“Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word  
for me ? ”

She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his  
cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers  
bloomed no more.

The woman fair who placed it there had died an hour  
before.

Both perished mute for lack of root, earth’s nourishment  
to reach.

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness  
out of each !

*A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.*

## I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight  
 Stand near the river-sea  
 Whose water sweepeth white around  
 The shadow of the tree ;  
 The moon and earth are face to face,  
 And earth is slumbering deep ;  
 The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams  
 That wander through her sleep :  
 The river floweth on.

## II.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,  
 Beside the river-sea ?  
 They bring the human heart wherein  
 No nightly calm can be,—  
 That droppeth never with the wind,  
 Nor drieth with the dew  
 Oh, calm in God ! thy calm is broad  
 To cover spirits too.  
 The river floweth on.

## III

The maidens lean them over  
The waters, side by side,  
And shun each other's deepening eyes,  
And gaze adown the tide,  
For each within a little boat  
A little lamp hath put,  
And heaped for freight some lily's weight  
Or scarlet rose half shut.  
The river floweth on

## IV.

Of shell of cocoa carven  
Each little boat is made ;  
Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,  
And carries a hope unsaid ;  
And when the boat hath carried the lamp  
Unquenched till out of sight,  
The maiden is sure that love will endure ;  
But love will fail with light.  
The river floweth on.

## V.

Why, all the stars are ready  
To symbolize the soul,

*A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES*

The stars untroubled by the wind,  
Unwearied as they roll ;  
And yet the soul by instinct sad  
Reverts to symbols low —  
To that small flame, whose very name  
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so !  
The river floweth on

VI.

Six boats are on the river,  
Seven maidens on the shore,  
While still above them steadfastly  
The stars shine evermore  
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,  
And guard the symbol spark !  
The boats aright go safe and bright  
Across the waters dark.  
The river floweth on.

VII

The maiden Luti watcheth  
Where onwardly they float :  
That look in her dilating eyes  
Might seem to drive her boat :  
Her eyes still mark the constant fire,

And kindling unawares  
That hopeful while, she lets a smile  
Creep silent through her prayers  
The river floweth on.

## VIII.

The smile—where hath it wandered?  
She riseth from her knee,  
She holds her dark, wet locks away—  
There is no light to see!  
She cries a quick and bitter cry—  
“Nuleeni, launch me thine!  
We must have light abroad to-night,  
For all the wreck of mine”  
The river floweth on.

## IX.

“I do remember watching  
Beside this river-bed  
When on my childish knee was leaned  
My dying father’s head;  
I turned mine own to keep the tears  
From falling on his face:  
What doth it prove when Death and Love  
Choose out the self-same place?”  
The river floweth on.

## X.

“ They say the dead are joyful  
The death-change here receiving :  
Who say—ah me ! who dare to say  
Where joy comes to the living ?  
Thy boat, Nuleen ! look not sad—  
Light up the waters rather !  
I weep no faithless lover where  
I wept a loving father.”  
The river floweth on.

## XI.

“ My heart foretold his falsehood  
Ere my little boat grew dim ;  
And though I closed mine eyes to dream  
That one last dream of *him*,  
They shall not now be wet to see  
The shining vision go :  
From earth’s cold love I look above  
To the holy house of snow.”\*  
The river floweth on.

\* The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.



## XII.

“Come thou—thou never knewest  
A grief, that thou shouldst fear one !  
Thou wearest still the happy look  
That shines beneath a dear one :  
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,\*  
Thy cuckoo in the grove,  
And all the three broad worlds, for thee  
Are full of wandering love ”  
The river floweth on.

## XIII.

“Why, maiden, dost thou loiter ?  
What secret wouldst thou cover ?  
That peepul cannot hide thy boat,  
And I can guess thy lover ;  
I heard thee sob his name in sleep,  
It was a name I knew .  
Come, little maid, be not afraid,  
But let us prove him true ! ”  
The river floweth on.

\* Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

## XIV.

The little maiden cometh,  
    She cometh shy and slow ;  
I ween she seeth through her lids  
    They drop adown so low :  
Her tresses meet her small bare feet,  
    She stands and speaketh nought,  
Yet blusheth red as if she said  
    The name she only thought  
                    The river floweth on.

## XV

She knelt beside the water,  
    She lighted up the flame,  
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm  
    The fitful radiance came :—  
“ Go, little boat, go soft and safe,  
    And guard the symbol spark ! ”  
Soft, safe doth float the little boat  
    Across the waters dark.  
                    The river floweth on.

## XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,  
    The light they cannot reach ;

She turneth with that sudden smile  
She learnt before her speech—  
“I do not hear his voice, the tears  
Have dimmed my light away,  
But the symbol light will last to-night,  
The love will last for aye !”  
The river floweth on.

## XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her,  
Outspake she bitterly—  
“By the symbol light that lasts to-night,  
Wilt vow a vow to me?”  
Nuleen gazeth up her face,  
Soft answer maketh she—  
“By loves that last when lights are past,  
I vow that vow to thee !”  
The river floweth on.

## XVIII

An earthly look had Luti  
Though her voice was deep as prayer—  
“The rice is gathered from the plains  
To cast upon thine hair : \*

\* The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

But when *he* comes his marriage-band  
Around thy neck to throw,  
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,  
And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*  
    *While Luti suffers woe*”  
The river floweth on.

## XIX.

“And when in seasons after,  
Thy little bright-faced son  
Shall lean against thy knee and ask  
What deeds his sire hath done,—  
Press deeper down thy mother-smile  
His glossy curls among,  
View deep his pretty childish eyes,  
And whisper,—*There is none denies,*  
    *While Luti speaks of wrong.*”  
The river floweth on.

## XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,  
Yet softly answered she—  
“By loves that last when lights are past,  
I vowed that vow to thee :  
But why glads it thee that a bride-day be

By a word of *woe* defiled?  
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song  
From the ear of a sinless child ? ”  
“ Why ? ” Luti said, and her laugh was dread,  
And her eyes dilated wild—  
“ That the fair new love may her bridegroom prove,  
And the father shame the child ! ”  
The river floweth on.

## XXI.

“ Thou flowest still, O river,  
Thou flowest 'neath the moon ;  
Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,\*  
Thy charmed lute a tune :  
*He* mixed his voice with thine and *his*  
Was all I heard around ;  
But now, beside his chosen bride,  
I hear the river's sound.”  
The river floweth on.

## XXII.

“ I gaze upon her beauty  
Through the tresses that enwreath it ,

\* The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

The light above thy wave, is hers—

My rest, alone beneath it :

Oh, give me back the dying look

My father gave thy water !

Give back—and let a little love

O'erwatch his weary daughter !”

The river floweth on.

XXIII.

“Give back !” she hath departed—

The word is wandering with her ;

And the stricken maidens hear afar

The step and cry together.

Frail symbols ? None are frail enow

For mortal joys to borrow !—

While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,

She weepeth dark with sorrow.

The river floweth on.

*RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.*

I

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,  
*Toll slowly*  
 And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the dead  
 When the rebecks are all done."

II.

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the north side in a  
 row,  
*Toll slowly*  
 And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes  
 Of the grassy graves below.

III.

On the south side and the west a small river runs in  
 haste,  
*Toll slowly*  
 And, between the river flowing and the fair green trees  
 a-growing,  
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow grey;

*Toll slowly*

Through the rain of willow-branches I could see the low  
hill-ranges

And the river on its way

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled  
solemnly,

*Toll slowly.*

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the  
solemn noises,—

Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI.

There I read this ancient rhyme while the bell did all  
the time

*Toll slowly.*

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,  
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.



## THE RHYME

## I.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,

*Toll slowly.*

And three hundred years had stood mute adown each  
hoary wood,

Like a full heart having prayed.

## II.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,

*Toll slowly.*

And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique  
years,

In the building of their nest

## III.

Down the sun dropt large and red on the towers of  
Linteged,—

*Toll slowly*

Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in  
fiery light,

While the castle stood in shade.

IV.

There the castle stood up black with the red sun at its  
back—

*Toll slowly—*

Like a sullen smouldering pyre with a top that flickers fire  
When the wind is on its track.

v.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle  
wall—

*Toll slowly.*

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and  
nights had stood  
And to-night was near its fall.

VI.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a  
bride did come—

*Toll slowly.*

One who proudly trod the floors and softly whispered in  
the doors,  
“May good angels bless our home.”

## VII.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies ·

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile of  
youth

Did light outward its own sighs !

## VIII

'T was a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward—  
the Earl—

*Toll slowly.*

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of  
dowry gold,

To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

## IX.

But what time she had made good all her years of  
womanhood—

*Toll slowly.*

Unto both these lords of Leigh spake she out right  
sovrانly,

“My will runneth as my blood.

X.

“And while this same blood makes red this same right  
hand’s veins,” she said—

*Toll slowly—*

“’T is my will, as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,  
But Sir Guy of Linteged ”

XI.

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for  
wilful youth—

*Toll slowly.*

“Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat  
soft and small  
For so large a will, in sooth.”

XII.

She too smiled by that same sign, but her smile was cold  
and fine—

*Toll slowly.*

“Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth  
the hold  
Of thy son, good uncle mine !”

## XIII.

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly  
in his teeth—

*Toll slowly—*

“He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an  
she loathed,  
Let the life come or the death.”

## XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child  
might rise—

*Toll slowly.*

“Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly  
heel,” quoth she,  
“And he moans not where he lies :

## XV.

“But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the  
sward”—

*Toll slowly.*

“By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl  
and dowered lady,  
I deny you wife and ward!’

XVI.

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with lofty  
tread.

*Toll slowly.*

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the  
priest  
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

XVII.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode  
amain—

*Toll slowly.*

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on  
the turf,  
In the pauses of the rain.

XVIII.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pur-  
sued amain—

*Toll slowly.*

Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling,  
hoof on hoof,  
In the pauses of the rain.

## XIX

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed  
of might—

*Toll slowly.*

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no  
harm,

Smiling out into the night.

## XX.

“Dost thou fear?” he said at last. “Nay,” she answered  
him in haste,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Not such death as we could find—only life with one  
behind

Ride on fast as fear, ride fast !”

## XXI.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground,  
and fetlocks spread—

*Toll slowly*

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered,  
down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

XXII.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus  
tossed about—

*Toll slowly*

In the courtyard rose the cry, "Live the Duchess and  
Sir Guy!"

But she never heard them shout.

XXIII

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane  
and kissed his neck—

*Toll slowly.*

"I had happier died by thee than lived on, a Lady  
Leigh,"

Were the first words she did speak.

XXIV.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment  
and to-day—

*Toll slowly.*

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle  
wall

To recapture Duchess May.



## XXV.

And the castle standeth black with the red sun at its  
back—

*Toll slowly.*

And a fortnight's siege is done, and, except the duchess,  
none

Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

## XXVI.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so  
grey of blee—

*Toll slowly.*

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white gnash-  
ing of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

## XXVII.

Cried aloud, "So goes the day, bridegroom fair of  
Duchess May!"

*Toll slowly*

"Look thy last upon that sun! if thou seest to-morrow's  
one

'T will be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII.

“Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound save that moaning  
of the hound?”

*Toll slowly.*

“Thou and I have parted troth, yet I keep my ven-  
geance-oath,  
And the other may come round.

XXIX.

“Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past  
compare”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Yet thine old love’s falchion brave is as strong a thing  
to have,  
As the will of lady fair.

XXX.

“Peck on blindly, netted dove! If a wife’s name thee  
behave”—

*Toll slowly—*

“Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has  
hid the sorrow  
Of thy last ill-mated love.

## XXXI.

“O’er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call  
back troth”:

*Toll slowly*

“He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at  
least

‘I forbid you, I am loth !’

## XXXII

“I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my  
mail”:

*Toll slowly.*

“ ‘ Little hand and muckle gold ’ close shall lie within my  
hold,

As the sword did, to prevail.”

## XXXIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west—

*Toll slowly.*

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put  
away

All his boasting, for a jest.

XXXIV

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

*Toll slowly.*

“Tower is strong and will is free: thou canst boast, my  
lord of Leigh,  
But thou boastest little wit.”

XXXV.

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she blushed right  
womanly—

*Toll slowly*

She blushed half from her disdain, half her beauty was  
so plain,  
—“Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!”

XXXVI.

Straight she called her maidens in—“Since ye gave me  
blame herein”—

*Toll slowly—*

“That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make  
it fine,  
Come and shrive me from that sin.

## XXXVII.

“It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand  
away”:

*Toll slowly.*

“Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-  
state in them,  
While we keep the foe at bay.

## XXXVIII.

“On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth and  
crown it fair”:

*Toll slowly.*

“I would look in purple pall from this lattice down the  
wall,  
And throw scorn to one that’s there!”

## XXXIX.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west—

*Toll slowly*

On the tower the castle’s lord leant in silence on his  
sword,  
With an anguish in his breast.

XL.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate :

*Toll slowly.*

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there-  
withal

With no knocking at the gate.

XLI.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped upon  
the stone—

*Toll slowly.*

“Sword,” he thought, with inward laugh, “ill thou servest  
for a staff

When thy nobler use is done !

XLII.

“Sword, thy nobler use is done ! tower is lost, and shame  
begun ! ”—

*Toll slowly.*

“If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to  
speech,

We should die there, each for one.

## XLIII.

“If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly  
fall”—

*Toll slowly*

“But if *I* die here alone,—then I die who am but one,  
And die nobly for them all

## XLIV.

“Five true friends lie for my sake in the moat and in the  
brake”—

*Toll slowly*

“Thirteen warriors lie at rest with a black wound in the  
breast,  
And not one of these will wake

## XLV.

“So, no more of this shall be! heart-blood weighs too  
heavily”—

*Toll slowly*

“And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and  
the brave

Heaped around and over me

XLVI.

“Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a  
plighted faith” —

*Toll slowly*

“Since my pale young sister’s cheeks blush like rose  
when Ronald speaks,  
Albert never a word she saith—

XLVII

“These shall never die for me · life-blood falls too  
heavily” ·

*Toll slowly*

“And if *I* die here apart, o’er my dead and silent heart  
They shall pass out safe and free

XLVIII

“When the foe hath heard it said—‘Death holds Guy  
of Linteged’”—

*Toll slowly.*

“That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessed,  
blessèd thing  
Shall the stone be at its head.



## XLIX.

“Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my  
memory”—

*Toll slowly*

“Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my  
widowed bride

Whose sole sin was love of me :

## L.

“With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front  
her and entreat”—

*Toll slowly.*

“And their purple pall will spread underneath her faint-  
ing head

While her tears drop over it.

## LI.

“She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her  
woman’s prayers”—

*Toll slowly.*

“But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will  
spring again

By the suntime of her years.

LII.

“Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed  
thee my belief”—

*Toll slowly—*

“That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets,  
in completeness!

Now my May-day seemeth brief.”

LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o’er his eyes grown  
strange and dim—

*Toll slowly*

Till his true men, in the place, wished they stood there  
face to face

With the foe instead of him.

LIV.

“One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to  
do and dare!”

*Toll slowly.*

“Tower must fall and bride be lost—swear me service  
worth the cost!”

Bold they stood around to swear.

## LV.

“Each man clasp my hand and swear by the deed we  
failed in there”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one  
blow to-night !”

Pale they stood around to swear.

## LVI

“One last boon, young Ralph and Clare ! faithful hearts  
to do and dare !”

*Toll slowly.*

“Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed  
before you all

Guide him up the turret-stair.

## LVII.

“Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this  
height :”

*Toll slowly.*

“Once in love and twice in war hath he borne me  
strong and far

He shall bear me far to-night.”

LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him  
speaking so—

*Toll slowly.*

“’Las! the noble heart,” they thought, “he in sooth is  
grief-distraught:

Would we stood here with the foe!”

LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye, ’twixt their thought and  
their reply—

*Toll slowly.*

“Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here,  
must ride fast

As we wish our foes to fly.”

LX.

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he  
did wear—

*Toll slowly.*

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes  
of the floors,

But they goad him up the stair.

## LXI

Then from out her bower chambère did the Duchess  
May repair :

*Toll slowly*

“ Tell me now what is your need,” said the lady, “ of this  
stéed,  
That ye goad him up the stair ? ”

## LXII.

Calm she stood ; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair  
to her shoe :

*Toll slowly*

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-  
glass,  
Had not time enough to go.

## LXIII.

Get thee back, sweet Duchess May ! hope is gone like  
yesterday” .

*Toll slowly.*

One half-hour completes the breach , and thy lord  
grows wild of speech—

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray !

LXIV.

“In the east tower, high’st of all, loud he cries for steed  
from stall” :

*Toll slowly.*

“‘He would ride as far,’ quoth he, ‘as for love and  
victory,  
Though he rides the castle-wall.’

LXV.

“And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a  
hoof did fall”—

*Toll slowly.*

“Wifely prayer meets deathly need: may the sweet  
Heavens hear thee plead  
If he rides the castle-wall!”

LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled  
on the floor—

*Toll slowly.*

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word  
Which you might be listening for.

## LXVII.

“Get thee in, thou soft ladye ! here is never a place for  
thee ! ”

*Toll slowly.*

“Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty  
in its moan  
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.”

## LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face ·

*Toll slowly.*

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering,  
seems to look  
Right against the thunder-place.

## LXIX

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the  
stone beside—

*Toll slowly.*

“Go to, faithful friends, go to ! judge no more what  
ladies do,  
No, nor how their lords may ride ! ”

LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did  
kiss and stroke.

*Toll slowly.*

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up  
the stair

For the love of her sweet look :

LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair  
around—

*Toll slowly*

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside  
her treading

Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a  
hoof did fall—

*Toll slowly.*

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely  
lady,

Calm as if in bower or stall.



## LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up  
silently—

*Toll slowly.*

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within  
her eyes

Which he could not bear to see.

## LXXIV.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife, and the sweet  
saints bless thy life!"

*Toll slowly.*

"In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan  
steed,

But no more of my noble wife."

## LXXV.

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under  
sun":

*Toll slowly*

"But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true  
and good,

I will never do this one.

LXXVI.

“Now by womanhood’s degree and by wifehood’s  
verity”—

*Toll slowly.*

“In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan  
steed,

Thou hast also need of *me*.

LXXVII.

“By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand  
pardie”—

*Toll slowly.*

“If, this hour, on castle-wall can be room for steed from  
stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

LXXVIII.

“So the sweet saints with me be,” (did she utter  
solemnly)—

*Toll slowly.*

“If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,  
He shall ride the same with *me*.”

## LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle and he laughed out bitter-  
well—

*Toll slowly.*

“Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on  
other eves,  
To hear chime a vesper-bell?”

## LXXX.

She clung closer to his knee — “Ay, beneath the  
cypress-tree!”

*Toll slowly.*

“Mock me not, for otherwhere than along the green-  
wood fair  
Have I ridden fast with thee.

## LXXXI.

“Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry  
kinsman’s house”.

*Toll slowly.*

“What, and would you men should reck that I dared  
more for love’s sake  
As a bride than as a spouse?”

LXXXII.

“What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb,  
before all”—

*Toll slowly*

“That a bride may keep your side while through castle-  
gate you ride,  
Yet eschew the castle-wall?”

LXXXIII.

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin and roars up against  
her sung—

*Toll slowly.*

With the inarticulate din and the dreadful falling in—  
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands  
closed again.

*Toll slowly.*

Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed  
along his track

With a frantic clasp and strain.

## LXXXV.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window  
and door—

*Toll slowly.*

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of  
“kill !” and “flee !”  
Strike up clear amid the roar.

## LXXXVI

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, but they closed and  
clung again—

*Toll slowly.*

While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon  
the rood,  
In a spasm of deathly pain.

## LXXXVII.

She clung wild and she clung mute with her shuddering  
lips half-shut .

*Toll slowly.*

Her head fallen as half in swoond, hair and knee swept  
on the ground,  
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery  
coping-stone :

*Toll slowly.*

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind  
Whence a hundred feet went down .

LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank  
bestrode—

*Toll slowly.*

“ Friends and brothers, save my wife ! Pardon, sweet, in  
change for life,—  
But I ride alone to God.”

XC.

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a  
flame—

*Toll slowly.*

She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sate in  
sight,

By her love she overcame.

## XCI.

And her head was on his breast where she smiled as  
one at rest—

*Toll slowly.*

“Ring,” she cried, “O vesper-bell in the beechwood’s  
old chapelle—

But the passing-bell rings best !”

## XCII.

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw  
loose—in vain—

*Toll slowly*

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised  
in air,

On the last verge rears amain.

## XCIII.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils  
curdle in—

*Toll slowly*

Now he shivers head and hoof and the flakes of foam  
fall off,

And his face grows fierce and thin :

XCIV

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go :

*Toll slowly.*

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony \*

Of the headlong death below,—

XCV.

And, “Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,” still she cried,

“I’ the old chapelle !”

*Toll slowly.*

Then, back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung

out to wrack,

Horse and riders overfell.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang

west—

*Toll slowly.*

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while

the chime

Slowly tolled for one at rest.



## II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did  
run—

*Toll slowly.*

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion  
and its change,

Here, where all done lay undone.

## III.

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see—

*Toll slowly—*

Where was graved —HERE, UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD,  
A THREE-YEAR CHILD,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE.

## IV.

Then O spirts, did I say, ye who rode so fast that  
day—

*Toll slowly.*

Did star-wheels and angel wings with their holy win-  
nowings

Keep beside you all the way?

v.

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and  
heavy crash—

*Toll slowly—*

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment  
in the field,—

Though your heart and brain were rash,—

vi.

Now, your will is all unwilling ; now, your pulses are all  
stilled .

*Toll slowly.*

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud  
the child

Whose small grave was lately filled.

vii.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient  
now—

*Toll slowly.*

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups  
from your mould

Ere a month had let them grow.

## VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in  
spring—

*Toll slowly*

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out  
on it,  
Murmuring not at anything

## IX.

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take  
not wrong—

*Toll slowly*

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,  
Time will seem to you not long

## X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west—

*Toll slowly*

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with  
death,

And who knoweth which is best ?

XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west—

*I'll slowly*

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around  
our incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

*THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.*

So the dreams depart,  
So the fading phantoms flee,  
And the sharp reality  
Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary*

I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone

'Mid the beeches of a meadow,  
By a stream-side on the grass,  
And the trees are showering down  
Doubles of their leaves in shadow  
On her shining hair and face

II.

She has thrown her bonnet by,  
And her feet she has been dipping  
In the shallow water's flow :  
Now she holds them nakedly  
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,  
While she rocketh to and fro.

## III.

Little Ellie sits alone,  
And the smile she softly uses  
Fills the silence like a speech  
While she thinks what shall be done,  
And the sweetest pleasure chooses  
For her future within reach.

## IV.

Little Ellie in her smile  
Chooses—"I will have a lover  
Riding on a steed of steeds :  
He shall love me without guile,  
And to *him* I will discover  
The swan's nest among the reeds.

## V.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,  
And the lover shall be noble,  
With an eye that takes the breath :  
And the lute he plays upon  
Shall strike ladies into trouble,  
As his sword strikes men to death.

## VI

“And the steed it shall be shod  
All in silver, housed in azure,  
And the mane shall swim the wind ;  
And the hoofs along the sod  
Shall flash onward and keep measure,  
Till the shepherds look behind.

## VII.

“But my lover will not prize  
All the glory that he rides in,  
When he gazes in my face .  
He will say, ‘O Love, thine eyes  
Build the shrine my soul abides in,  
And I kneel here for thy grace !’

## VIII.

“Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,  
With the red-roan steed anear him  
Which shall seem to understand,  
Till I answer, ‘Rise and go !’  
For the world must love and fear him  
Whom I gift with heart and hand.’

## IX

"Then he will arise so pale,  
 I shall feel my own lips tremble  
 With a *yes* I must not say,  
 Nathless maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'  
 I will utter, and dissemble—  
 'Light to-morrow with to-day!'

## X.

"Then he 'll ride among the hills  
 To the wide world past the river,  
 There to put away all wrong ;  
 To make straight distorted wills,  
 And to empty the broad quiver  
 Which the wicked bear along.

## XI.

"Three times shall a young foot-page  
 Swim the stream and climb the mountain  
 And kneel down beside my feet—  
 'Lo, my master sends this gage,  
 Lady, for thy pity's counting !  
 What wilt thou exchange for it?



## XII.

“ And the first time I will send  
A white rosebud for a guerdon,  
And the second time, a glove,  
But the third time—I may bend  
From my pride, and answer—‘ Pardon  
If he comes to take my love.’

## XIII

“ Then the young foot-page will run,  
Then my lover will ride faster,  
Till he kneeleth at my knee :  
‘ I am a duke’s eldest son,  
Thousand serfs do call me master,  
But, O Love, I love but *thee!*’

## XIV.

“ He will kiss me on the mouth  
Then, and lead me as a lover  
Through the crowds that praise his deeds ;  
And, when soul-tied by one troth,  
Unto *him* I will discover  
That swan’s nest among the reeds.”

## XV.

Little Ellie, with her smile  
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,  
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,  
And went homeward, round a mile,  
Just to see, as she did daily,  
What more eggs were with the two

## XVI.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,  
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,  
Where the osier pathway leads,  
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.  
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,  
And a rat had gnawed the reeds!

## XVII.

Ellie went home sad and slow.  
If she found the lover ever,  
With his red-roan steed of steeds,  
Sooth I know not, but I know  
She could never show him—never,  
That swan's nest among the reeds!

*BERTHA IN THE LANE.*

## I

PUT the broidery-frame away,  
 For my sewing is all done  
 The last thread is used to-day,  
 And I need not join it on.  
 Though the clock stands at the noon  
 I am weary I have sewn,  
 Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown

## II

Sister, help me to the bed,  
 And stand near me, Dearest-sweet  
 Do not shrink nor be afraid,  
 Blushing with a sudden heat !  
 No one standeth in the street ?—  
 By God's love I go to meet,  
 Love I thee with love complete.

## III.

Lean thy face down , drop it in  
These two hands, that I may hold  
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,  
Stroking back the curls of gold :  
'T is a fair, fair face, in sooth—  
Larger eyes and redder mouth  
Than mine were in my first youth.

## IV.

Thou art younger by seven years—  
Ah !—so bashful at my gaze,  
That the lashes, hung with tears,  
Grow too heavy to upraise ?  
I would wound thee by no touch  
Which thy shyness feels as such.  
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much ?

## V.

Have I not been nigh a mother  
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear ?  
Have we not loved one another  
Tenderly, from year to year,  
Since our dying mother mild  
Said with accents undefiled,  
“ Child, be mother to this child ” !

## VI

Mother, mother, up in heaven,  
Stand up on the jasper sea,  
And be witness I have given  
All the gifts required of me,—  
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,  
Love that left me with a wound,  
Life itself that turneth round !

## VII.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,  
Thou art standing in the room,  
In a molten glory shrined  
That rays off into the gloom !  
But thy smile is bright and bleak  
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,  
I sob in it, and grow weak.

## VIII

Ghostly mother, keep aloof  
One hour longer from my soul,  
For I still am thinking of  
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole !  
On my finger is a ring  
Which I still see glittering  
When the night hides everything.

## IX.

Little sister, thou art pale !

Ah, I have a wandering brain—  
But I lose that fever-bale,

And my thoughts grow calm again.  
Lean down closer—closer still !  
I have words thine ear to fill,  
And would kiss thee at my will.

## X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,  
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—  
When we all went gathering  
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.  
Do not start so ! think instead  
How the sunshine overhead  
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

## XI.

What a day it was, that day !  
Hills and vales did openly  
Seem to heave and throb away  
At the sight of the great sky :  
And the silence, as it stood  
In the glory's golden flood,  
Audibly did bud, and bud.

## XII.

Through the winding hedgerows green,  
How we wandered, I and you,  
With the bowery tops shut in,  
And the gates that showed the view !  
How we talked there ; thrushes soft  
Sang our praises out, or oft  
Bleatings took them from the croft .

## XIII.

Till the pleasure grown too strong  
Left me muter evermore,  
And, the winding road being long,  
I walked out of sight, before,  
And so, wrapt in musings fond,  
Issued (past the wayside pond)  
On the meadow-lands beyond.

## XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech  
Which leans over to the lane,  
And the far sound of your speech  
Did not promise any pain ;  
And I blessed you full and free,  
With a smile stooped tenderly  
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV

But the sound grew into word  
 As the speakers drew more near—  
 Sweet, forgive me that I heard  
 What you wished me not to hear.  
 Do not weep so, do not shake,  
 Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make  
 Good true answers for my sake.

XVI

Yes, and HE too! let him stand  
 In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.  
 Could he help it, if my hand  
 He had claimed with hasty claim?  
 That was wrong perhaps—but then  
 Such things be—and will, again.  
 Women cannot judge for men.

XVII.

Had he seen thee when he swore  
 He would love but me alone?  
 Thou wast absent, sent before  
 To our kin in Sidmouth town.  
 When he saw thee who art best  
 Past compare, and loveliest.  
 He but judged thee as the rest.



## XVIII.

Could we blame him with grave words,  
Thou and I, Dear, if we might ?  
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds  
Flying straightway to the light  
Mine are older.—Hush !—look out—  
Up the street ! Is none without ?  
How the poplar swings about !

## XIX.

And that hour—beneath the beech,  
When I listened in a dream,  
And he said in his deep speech  
That he owed me all *esteem*,—  
Each word swam in on my brain  
With a dim, dilating pain,  
Till it burst with that last strain.

## XX.

I fell flooded with a dark,  
In the silence of a swoon.  
When I rose, still cold and stark,  
There was night ; I saw the moon  
And the stars, each in its place,  
And the May-blooms on the grass,  
Seemed to wonder what I was.

## XXI.

And I walked as if apart  
From myself, when I could stand,  
And I pitied my own heart,  
As if I held it in my hand—  
Somewhat coldly, with a sense  
Of fulfilled benevolence,  
And a “Poor thing” negligence.

## XXII.

And I answered coldly too,  
When you met me at the door ;  
And I only *heard* the dew  
Dripping from me to the floor :  
And the flowers, I bade you see,  
Were too withered for the bee,—  
As my life, henceforth, for me.

## XXIII

Do not weep so—Dear,—heart-warm !  
All was best as it befell.  
If I say he did me harm,  
I speak wild,—I am not well.  
All his words were kind and good—  
*He esteemed me.* Only, blood  
Runs so faint in womanhood !

## XXIV

Then I always was too grave,—  
Liked the saddest ballad sung,—  
With that look, besides, we have  
In our faces, who die young.  
I had died, Dear, all the same ;  
Life's long, joyous, jostling game  
Is too loud for my meek shame.

## XXV

We are so unlike each other,  
Thou and I, that none could guess  
We were children of one mother,  
But for mutual tenderness  
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,  
And meant verily to hold  
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

## XXVI.

I am pale as crocus grows  
Close beside a rose-tree's root ;  
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,  
Treads the crocus underfoot  
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,  
Thou, like merry summer-bee,—  
Fit that I be plucked for thee !

## XXVII.

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns,  
I have lived my season out,  
And now die of my own thorns  
Which I could not live without.  
Sweet, be merry! How the light  
Comes and goes! If it be night,  
Keep the candles in my sight

## XXVIII.

Are there footsteps at the door?  
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?  
Some one might be waiting for  
Some last word that I might say.  
Nay? So best!—so angels would  
Stand off clear from deathly road,  
Not to cross the sight of God.

## XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet  
When I wear the shroud I made,  
Let the folds lie straight and neat,  
And the rosemary be spread,  
That if any friend should come,  
(To see *thee*, Sweet!) all the room  
May be lifted out of gloom.

## XXX.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep  
On my hand this little ring,  
Which at nights, when others sleep,  
I can still see glittering !  
Let me wear it out of sight,  
In the grave,—where it will light  
All the dark up, day and night.

## XXXI

On that grave drop not a tear !  
Else, though fathom-deep the place,  
Through the woollen shroud I wear  
I shall feel it on my face  
Rather smile there, blessèd one,  
Thinking of me in the sun,  
Or forget me—smiling on !

## XXXII.

Art thou near me ? nearer ! so—  
Kiss me close upon the eyes,  
That the earthly light may go  
Sweetly, as it used to rise  
When I watched the morning-grey  
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way  
He was sure to come that day.

## XXXIII.

So,—no more vain words be said!  
The hosannas nearer roll.  
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,  
I am death-strong in my soul.  
Mystic Dove alit on cross,  
Guide the poor bird of the snows  
Through the snow-wind above loss!

## XXXIV.

Jesus, Victim, comprehending  
Love's divine self-abnegation,  
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,  
And absorb the poor libation!  
Wind my thread of life up higher,  
Up, through angels' hands of fire!  
I aspire while I expire.

*LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.*

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

*A Poet writes to his Friend* PLACE—*A Room in Wycombe Hall.* TIME—*Late in the evening*

I.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my  
spirit o'er you !

Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely  
run at will.

I am humbled who was humble Friend, I bow my  
head before you :

You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces are  
too still

II.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she  
is noble,

And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes the  
perfumed air,

And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye  
to trouble,  
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her  
hair.

## III.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by  
the breakers,  
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and  
command.  
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her  
acres,  
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of  
the land.

## IV.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a  
prouder presence;  
Upon princely suitors' praying she has looked in her  
disdain.  
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English  
peasants;  
What was *I* that I should love her, save for competence  
to pain?



## V.

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,  
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of  
other things.

Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my  
abasement,

In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

## VI.

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps  
their doorways ;

She has blest their little children, as a priest or queen  
were she :

Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor  
was,

For I thought it was the same smile which she used to  
smile on *me*.

## VII.

She has voters in the Commons, she has lovers in the  
palace,

And, of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine ,  
Oft the Prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine  
and the chalice :

Oh, and what was *I* to love her ? my beloved, my Geraldine !

## VIII.

Yet I could not choose but love her. I was born to  
poet-uses,  
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.  
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call  
the Muses,  
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount  
to star.

## IX.

And because I was a poet, and because the public  
praised me,  
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,  
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies  
that raised me,  
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the  
salt.

## X.

And they praised me in her presence—"Will your book  
appear this summer?"  
Then returning to each other—"Yes, our plans are for  
the moors."  
Then with whisper dropped behind me—"There he is!  
the latest comer.  
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures.

## XI.

“Quite low-born, self-educated ! somewhat gifted though  
by nature,  
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very  
kind.  
You may speak, he does not hear you ! and, besides,  
he writes no satire,—  
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural  
sting behind.’

## XII.

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there  
among them,  
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning  
scorched my brow ;  
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-  
rung them,  
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature  
through.

## XIII.

I looked upward and beheld her : with a calm and  
regnant spirit,  
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before  
them all—

“Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to  
confer it  
You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to  
Wycombe Hall?”

## XIV.

Here she paused ; she had been paler at the first word of  
her speaking,  
But, because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as  
for shame :  
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—“I  
am seeking  
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of  
my claim.

## XV.

“Ne’ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a  
woman,”  
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, over-  
flowed her mouth)  
“But because my woods in Sussex have some purple  
shades at gloaming  
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his  
youth.

## XVI.

"I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—

Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first.

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,

I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human world, at worst "

## XVII.

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right queenly,

And I bowed—I could not answer ; alternated light and gloom—

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,

She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

## XVIII.

Oh, the blessèd woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,

With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind !

Oh, the cursèd woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's  
    arrow found me,  
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad  
    and blind !

## XIX.

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous  
    guests invited,  
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding  
    feet ;  
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly  
    freighted  
All the air about the windows with elastic laughs  
    sweet.

## XX.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the  
    terrace  
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual  
    shadow sweep,  
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the  
    heiress,  
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music  
    in their sleep.

## XXI.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and  
singing,  
Till the finches of the shubberies grew restless in the  
dark ;  
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight's  
ringing,  
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows  
of the park.

## XXII.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her  
silver-corded speeches  
To commix my words and laughter with the converse  
and the jest,  
Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through the  
beeches,  
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice  
o'erfloat the rest.

## XXIII

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and  
laugh of rider,  
Spread out cheery from the courtyard till we lost them  
in the hills,

While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside  
her,  
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels  
and abeles.

## XXIV.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded,  
with the flowing  
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her  
throat,  
And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by  
her going,  
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to  
float,—

## XXV.

With a bunch of dewy maple, which her right hand held  
above her,  
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and  
the skies,  
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to  
love her,  
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her  
eyes.



## XXVI

For her eyes alone smile constantly, her lips have serious  
sweetness,  
And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the  
cheek,  
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in  
discreetness  
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to  
speak

## XXVII.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the  
garden,  
And I walked among her noble friends and could not  
keep behind.  
Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the  
warden  
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to  
their mind

## XXVIII.

"But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk  
brings us,  
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in  
reverent fear,

I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain  
sings us  
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough  
to hear.

## XXIX.

“The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet  
of water  
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting  
saint :  
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping (Lough the  
sculptor wrought her),  
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush !—a fancy  
quaint.

## XXX

“Mark how heavy white her eyelids ! not a dream be-  
tween them lingers ;  
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon  
the cheek  
While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack  
within the fingers,—  
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will  
not speak !

## XXXI.

“That the essential meaning growing may exceed the  
special symbol,  
Is the thought as I conceive it · it applies more high and  
low  
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness  
grow humble,  
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.”

## XXXII.

“Nay, your Silence,” said I, “truly, holds her symbol-rose  
but slackly,  
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our  
ken  
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or  
walk blackly  
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men

## XXXIII.

“Let the poets dream such dreaming ! madam, in these  
British islands  
'T is the substance that wanes ever, 't is the symbol that  
exceeds.

Soon we shall have nought but symbol and, for statues  
like this Silence,  
Shall accept the rose's image— in another case, the  
weed's."

## XXXIV.

"Not so quickly," she retorted,—“I confess, where'er  
you go, you  
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold  
for honour clear :  
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw  
you  
The world's book which now reads dryly, and sit down  
with Silence here."

## XXXV.

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in  
indignation ;  
Friends, who listened, laughed her words off, while her  
lovers deemed her fair .  
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted  
station  
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in  
sunny air !

## XXXVI.

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their  
    vernal murmur,  
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and out-  
    ward move,  
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be  
    warmer,  
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light  
    above.

## XXXVII.

'T is a picture for remembrance   And thus, morning after  
    morning,  
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet  
Why, her greyhound followed also ! dogs—we both were  
    dogs for scorning—  
'To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay  
    through the wheat

## XXXVIII

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite  
    of sorrow,  
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed  
    along,—

Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns  
to-morrow,  
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a  
song

## XXXIX.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in  
the gowans,  
With the forest green behind us and its shadow cast  
before,  
And the river running under, and across it from the  
rowans  
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it  
bore,—

## XL.

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the  
poems  
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various  
of our own,  
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle inter-  
flowings  
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book, the leaf is  
folded down !

## XLI.

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-  
thoughted idyl,  
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—  
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut  
deep down the middle,  
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined  
humanity.

## XLII.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of  
my making:  
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their  
worth,  
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you  
are speaking,  
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which  
you drive them forth.

## XLIII

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence  
round us flinging  
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at  
the breast

She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland  
singing,  
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest

## XLIV.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is  
divinest,  
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on  
the tune,  
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song, and when  
the notes are finest,  
'T is the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell  
them on.

## XLV

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so  
cadenced in the talking,  
Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without  
bars :  
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round  
where we were walking,  
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the  
stars.



## XLVI

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she  
always thought them,  
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on  
branch,  
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought  
them,  
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the  
grange.

## XLVII.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she  
speaks lightly,  
Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls  
approve,  
For the root of some grave earnest thought is under-  
struck so rightly  
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

## XLVIII

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather ! upon all things,  
substance, shadow,  
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers in  
the corn,

Of the little children from the schools, seen winding  
through the meadow,  
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by  
its scorn.

## XLIX.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher  
stature,  
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to  
hear ;  
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into  
nature,  
Yet will lift the cry of “progress,” as it trod from sphere  
to sphere.

## L.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—“The  
Age culls simples,  
With a broad clown’s back turned broadly to the glory  
of the stars.  
We are gods by our own reck’ning, and may well shut up  
the temples,  
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of  
our cars.

## LI.

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self  
admiring,  
With, at every mile run faster,—‘O the wondrous  
wondrous age!’  
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our  
iron,  
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

## LII.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature’s deep  
resources  
But the child’s most gradual learning to walk upright  
without bane?  
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic  
white horses,  
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by  
the mane?

## LIII.

“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars  
in rising,  
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric  
breath,

'T were but power within our tether, no new spirit-power  
comprising,  
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in  
death."

## LIV.

She was patient with my talking , and I loved her, loved  
her certes  
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and  
hands ;  
As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the  
virtues,  
In a Love content with writing his own name on desert  
sands.

## LV.

Or at least I thought so, purely ; thought no idiot Hope  
was raising  
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sate  
alone :  
Out, alas ! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on  
grazing  
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels  
with sudden moan.

## LVI

It was thus I reeled    I told you that her hand had many  
    suits ;  
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did the  
    waves,  
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press  
    their futures  
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly en-  
    slaves

## LVII.

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner  
    chamber  
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought  
    serene,  
For I had been reading Camoens, that poem you re-  
    member,  
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest ever  
    seen.

## LVIII.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it,  
    taking from it  
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,

As the branch of a green osier, when a child would  
overcome it,  
Springs up freely from his claspings and goes swinging in  
the sun

## LIX.

As I mused I heard a murmur, it grew deep as it grew  
longer,  
Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine, you  
*would!*"  
And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents  
stronger,  
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric  
good

## LX.

Well I knew that voice; it was an earl's, of soul that  
matched his station,  
Soul completed into lordship, might and right read on his  
brow;  
Very finely courteous, far too proud to doubt his domi-  
nation  
Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a  
bow.

## LXI.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes of  
less expression  
Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other  
men,  
As steel, arrows, unelastic lips which seem to taste  
possession  
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or  
distrain

## LXII.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing  
by his order  
With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art and letters  
too ;  
Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks  
that border  
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and  
flow.

## LXIII.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not help  
the hearkening :  
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart  
within

Secmed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all  
sides darkening,  
And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet  
that stood therein.

## LXIV.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake, for  
wealth, position,  
For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be  
done:  
And she interrupted gently, "Nay, my lord, the old  
tradition  
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,  
should be won."

## LXV.

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his he  
either drew it  
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she re-  
plied,  
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best  
eschew it  
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to  
decide"



## LXVI.

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his  
trouble

Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in  
slow scorn,

“And your lordship judges rightly Whom I marry  
shall be noble,

Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he  
was born.”

## LXVII.

There, I maddened ! her words stung me. Life swept  
through me into fever,

And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-statured  
in an hour

Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic  
NEVER,

To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimates to  
power?

## LXVIII

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame  
about my body,

Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn  
out, as man,

From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow  
    ruddy  
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what  
    spirits can.

## LXIX

I was mad, inspired—say either ! (anguish worketh in-  
    spiration)  
Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when  
    speared ;  
And I walked on, step by step along the level of my  
    passion—  
Oh my soul ! and passed the doorway to her face, and  
    never feared.

## LXX.

*He* had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved  
    my coming,  
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet and  
    grew pale.  
Oh, she trembled ! 't is so always with a worldly man or  
    woman  
In the presence of true spirits ; what else *can* they do but  
    quail ?

## LXXI.

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-  
brothers  
Far too strong for it ; then drooping, bowed her face  
upon her hands ;  
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and  
others .  
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with  
my sands.

## LXXII.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though  
leaf-verdant,  
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple  
and the gold,  
All the “landed stakes” and lordships, all that spirits  
pure and ardent  
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not  
to hold.

## LXXIII.

“For myself I do not argue,” said I, “though I love  
you, madam,  
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours  
have trod ;

And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to  
Adam

Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

## LXXIV.

"Yet, O God," I said, "O grave," I said, "O mother's  
heart and bosom,

With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and  
little child !

We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of  
heart-closing ;

We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies de-  
filed.

## LXXV.

"Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or  
wealth—*that* needs no learning .

*That* comes quickly, quick as sin does, ay, and culmi-  
nates to sin ,

But for Adam's seed, MAN ! Trust me, 't is a clay above  
your scorning,

With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling  
breath within.

## LXXVI

“What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace  
mirror daily,  
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must  
adore,  
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to  
vow gaily  
You will wed no man that’s only good to God, and  
nothing more ?

## LXXVII

“Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God,  
the sweetest woman  
Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely spirit-  
face  
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were  
not so human,  
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words  
to grace,—

## LXXVIII.

“What right *can* you have, God’s other works to scorn,  
despise, revile them  
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men,  
forsooth,—

As mere Pariahs of the outer world, forbidden to assoil  
them  
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your  
mouth?

## LXXIX.

“Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were  
less earthly,  
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver  
string,  
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold  
me! I am worthy  
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king

## LXXX.

“As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this  
stain upon her,  
That I, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me  
and you again,  
Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief and  
your dishonour,  
To my endless desolation, and your impotent dis-  
dain!”

## LXXXI.

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I  
    need not write them fuller,  
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers  
    of tears.  
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why, a beast had  
    scarce been duller  
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining  
    of the spheres.

## LXXXII.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating  
    with thunder  
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face  
    up like a call  
Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked  
    up, as if in wonder,  
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—"Bertram!"  
    —It was all.

## LXXXIII.

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if even,  
    with queenly bearing  
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and  
    said,

“Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you  
a full hearing .

Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat  
less, instead ! ”—

## LXXXIV.

I had borne it . but that “ Bertram ”—why, it lies there  
on the paper

A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge  
the weight

Of the calm which crushed my passion : I seemed  
drowning in a vapour ;

And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn  
made desolate.

## LXXXV.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow  
of passion

Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of  
abstract truth,

By a logic agonizing through unseemly demonstra-  
tion,

And by youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the  
hairs of youth,—



## LXXXVI.

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake  
wisely  
I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed was  
true,  
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there  
weighing nicely  
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as  
I could do !—

## LXXXVII

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and  
occasioned,—  
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his  
eyes,  
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,  
impassioned,  
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly  
drops and dies—

## LXXXVIII.

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me,  
friend, for weakness?  
'T was my strength of passion slew me !—fell before her  
like a stone ;

Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its roaring  
wheels of blackness ·

When the light came I was lying in this chamber and  
alone,

## LXXXIX.

Oh, of course she charged her lacqueys to bear out the  
sickly burden,

And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond* the  
gate ;

She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to  
pardon

Such a man as I ; 't were something to be level to her  
hate.

## XC.

But for me—you now are conscious why, my friend, I  
write this letter,

How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life  
undone.

I shall leave her house at dawn ; I would to-night, if I  
were better—

And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for  
the sun.

## XCI.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last  
gazes,  
No weak moanings (one word only, left in writing for her  
hands),  
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,  
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign  
lands.

## XCII.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—I  
am abstemious  
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar  
again  
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes  
of a Phemius :  
Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die  
*till then.*

## CONCLUSION.

## I.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence  
    ever  
Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every  
    leaf.  
Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips  
    that quiver  
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts  
    of grief.

## II.

Soh ! how still the lady standeth ! 'T is a dream—a  
    dream of mercies !  
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth still  
    and pale !  
'T is a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self  
    curses,  
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

## III.

“Eyes,” he said, “now throbbing through me ! are ye  
eyes that did undo me ?

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-  
stone !

Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning  
torrid

O’er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life un-  
done ? ”

## IV

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple  
curtain

Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale  
brows,

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for  
ever

Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight’s  
slant repose

## V

Said he—“Vision of a lady ! stand there silent, stand  
there steady !

Now I see it plainly, plainly now I cannot hope or  
doubt—

There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of  
silent passion,  
Curvèd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows  
out."

## VI.

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept  
smiling,  
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding mea-  
sured pace ;  
With her two white hands extended as if praying one  
offended,  
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

## VII.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or  
stir of vesture !  
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine !  
No approaching—hush, no breathing ! or my heart must  
swoon to death in  
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of GERAL-  
DINE !"

## VIII.

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept  
smiling,

But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly :—

“Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far  
above me

Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one  
as *I*?”

## IX.

Said he—“I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that  
river,

Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea !

So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness

Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through  
this dream of *THEE* !”

## X.

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept  
smiling,

While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her  
cheeks ;

Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she  
softly told him,  
“Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . ’t is the vision only  
speaks.”

## XI.

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell  
before her,  
And she whispered low in triumph, “It shall be as I  
have sworn.  
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes;  
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him  
lowly born.”



*THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S  
POINT.*

## I

I STAND on the mark beside the shore  
 Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,  
 Where exile turned to ancestor,  
 And God was thanked for liberty.  
 I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,  
 I bend my knee down on this mark :  
 I look on the sky and the sea

## II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !  
 I see you come proud and slow  
 From the land of the spirits pale as dew  
 And round me and round me ye go.  
 O pilgrims, I have gasped and run  
 All night long from the whips of one  
 Who in your names works sin and woe !

## III.

And thus I thought that I would come  
And kneel here where ye knelt before,  
And feel your souls around me hum  
In undertone to the ocean's roar ;  
And lift my black face, my black hand,  
Here, in your names, to curse this land  
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

## IV.

I am black, I am black,  
And yet God made me, they say :  
But if He did so, smiling back  
He must have cast his work away  
Under the feet of his white creatures,  
With a look of scorn, that the dusky features  
Might be trodden again to clay.

## V

And yet He has made dark things  
To be glad and merry as light .  
There 's a little dark bird sits and sings,  
There 's a dark stream ripples out of sight,  
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,  
And the sweetest stars are made to pass  
O'er the face of the darkest night.

## VI

But *we* who are dark, we are dark !  
Ah God, we have no stars !  
About our souls in care and cark  
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars :  
The poor souls crouch so far behind  
That never a comfort can they find  
By reaching through the prison-bars.

## VII.

Indeed we live beneath the sky,  
That great smooth Hand of God stretched out  
On all His children fatherly,  
To save them from the dread and doubt  
Which would be if, from this low place,  
All opened straight up to His face  
Into the grand eternity.

## VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,  
They make us hot, they make us cold,  
As if we were not black and lost ,  
And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,  
Do fear and take us for very men :  
Could the whip-poor-will or the cat of the glen  
Look into my eyes and be bold?

## IX.

I am black, I am black !

But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,  
For one of my colour stood in the track

Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,  
And tender and full was the look he gave—  
Could a slave look *so* at another slave?—

I look at the sky and the sea.

## X

And from that hour our spirits grew

As free as if unsold, unbought :

Oh, strong enough, since we were two,

To conquer the world, we thought.

The drivers drove us day by day ;

We did not mind, we went one way,

And no better a freedom sought.

## XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,

He said “ I love you ” as he passed ;

When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,

I heard how he vowed it fast :

While others shook he smiled in the hut,

As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut

Through the roar of the hurricanes.

## XII.

I sang his name instead of a song,  
Over and over I sang his name,  
Upward and downward I drew it along  
My various notes,—the same, the same !  
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near  
Might never guess, from aught they could hear,  
It was only a name—a name.

## XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea.  
We were two to love, and two to pray :  
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,  
Though nothing didst Thou say !  
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun :  
And now I cry who am but one,  
Thou wilt not speak to-day.

## XIV.

We were black, we were black,  
We had no claim to love and bliss,  
What marvel if each went to wrack ?  
They wrung my cold hands out of his,  
They dragged him—where ? I crawled to touch  
His blood's mark in the dust . . . not much,  
Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as *this* !

## XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !  
Mere grief 's too good for such as I  
So the white men brought the shame ere long  
To strangle the sob of my agony  
They would not leave me for my dull  
Wet eyes !—it was too merciful  
To let me weep pure tears and die.

## XVI.

I am black, I am black !  
I wore a child upon my breast,  
An amulet that hung too slack,  
And, in my unrest, could not rest .  
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,  
One to another, one to another,  
Until all ended for the best.

## XVII.

For hark ! I will tell you low, low,  
I am black, you see,—  
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,  
Was far too white, too white for me ,  
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray  
Beside me at church but yesterday,  
Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

## XVIII

My own, own child ! I could not bear  
To look in his face, it was so white ;  
I covered him up with a kerchief there.  
I covered his face in close and tight :  
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,  
For the white child wanted his liberty—  
Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

## XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,  
His little feet that never grew ;  
He struck them out, as it was meet,  
Against my heart to break it through :  
I might have sung and made him mild,  
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child  
The only song I knew.

## XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close :  
He could not see the sun, I swear,  
More, then, alive, than now he does  
From between the roots of the mango . . . where?  
I know where Close ! A child and mother  
Do wrong to look at one another  
When one is black and one is fair.

## XXI

Why, in that single glance I had  
Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,  
I saw a look that made me mad !  
The *master's* look, that used to fall  
On my soul like his lash . . . or worse !  
And so, to save it from my curse,  
I twisted it round in my shawl.

## XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,  
He shivered from head to foot ;  
Till after a time, he lay instead  
Too suddenly still and mute.  
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold :  
I dared to lift up just a fold,  
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

## XXIII

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha !—there, had been  
(I laugh to think on 't at this hour !)  
Your fine white angels (who have seen  
Nearest the secret of God's power)  
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,  
And sucked the soul of that child of mine  
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.



## XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !  
They freed the white child's spirit so.  
I said not a word, but day and night  
I carried the body to and fro,  
And it lay on my heart like a stone, as chill.  
—The sun may shine out as much as he will  
I am cold, though it happened a month ago

## XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,  
I carried the little body on ,  
The forest's arms did round us shut,  
And silence through the trees did run :  
They asked no question as I went,  
They stood too high for astonishment,  
They could see God sit on his throne.

## XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,  
I bore it on through the forest, on ;  
And when I felt it was tired at last,  
I scooped a hole beneath the moon :  
Through the forest-tops the angels far,  
With a white sharp finger from every star,  
Did point and mock at what was done.

## XXVII.

Yet when it was all done a1ight,—

Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,—

All, changed to black earth,—nothing white,—

A dark child in the dark !—ensued

Some comfort, and my heart grew young ;

I sate down smiling there and sung

The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

## XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,

The white child and black mother, thus ;

For as I sang it soft and wild,

The same song, more melodious,

Rose from the grave whereon I sate

It was the dead child singing that,

To join the souls of both of us.

## XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky.

Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay

The free sun rideth gloriously,

But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away

Through the earliest streaks of the morn :

My face is black, but it glares with a scorn

Which they dare not meet by day.

## XXX

Ha !—in their stead, their hunter sons !

Ha, ha ! they are on me—they hunt in a ring !  
Keep off ! I brave you all at once,

I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting !  
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think .  
Did you ever stand still in your triumph, and shrink  
From the stroke of her wounded wing ?

## XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift !—)

I wish you who stand there five abreast.  
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,  
A little corpse as safely at rest  
As mine in the mangoes ! Yes, but *she*  
May keep live babies on her knee,  
And sing the song she likes the best.

## XXXII.

I am not mad I am black.

I see you staring in my face—  
I know you staring, shrinking back,  
Ye are born of the Washington-race,  
And this land is the free America,  
And this mark on my wrist—(I prove what I say)  
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

## XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!

I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun,  
I only cursed them all around

As softly as I might have done  
My very own child from these sands  
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,  
O slaves, and end what I begun!

## XXXIV.

Whips, curses, these must answer those!

For in this UNION you have set  
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,  
Each loathing each, and all forget  
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,  
While HE sees gaping everywhere  
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

## XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men  
Are, after all, not gods indeed,  
Nor able to make Christs again  
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed  
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!  
*We* are too heavy for our cross,  
And fall and crush you and your seed.

## XXXVI

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky.

The clouds are breaking on my brain

I am floated along, as if I should die

Of liberty's exquisite pain.

In the name of the white child waiting for me

In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,

White men, I leave you all curse-free

In my broken heart's disdain !

## *THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.*

“Φεῦ, φεῦ, τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ’ ὀμμασιν, τέκνα;” - *Μελέτι.*

### I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
     Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
 They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,  
     And *that* cannot stop their tears  
 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,  
     The young birds are chirping in the nest,  
 The young fawns are playing with the shadows,  
     The young flowers are blowing toward the west  
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
     They are weeping bitterly!  
 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
     In the country of the free.

### II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow  
     Why their tears are falling so?

The old man may weep for his to-morrow  
Which is lost in Long Ago ;  
The old tree is leafless in the forest,  
The old year is ending in the frost,  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,  
The old hope is hardest to be lost :  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland ?

## III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy ,  
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,  
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak ;  
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek :  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,  
For the outside earth is cold,  
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old."

## IV.

“True,” say the children, “it may happen  
That we die before our time .  
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen  
Like a snowball, in the rime.  
We looked into the pit prepared to take her :  
Was no room for any work in the close clay !  
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,  
Crying, ‘Get up, little Alice ! it is day.’  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,  
With your ear down, little Alice never cries ;  
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,  
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes .  
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in  
The shroud by the kirk-chime.  
It is good when it happens,” say the children,  
“That we die before our time.”

## V.

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking  
Death in life, as best to have :  
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,  
With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,  
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do ;



Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,  
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !  
But they answer, " Are your cowslips of the meadows  
Like our weeds anear the mine ?  
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,  
From your pleasures fair and fine !

## VI.

" For oh," say the children, " we are weary,  
And we cannot run or leap ;  
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely  
To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,  
We fall upon our faces, trying to go ,  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,  
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.  
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, underground ,  
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
In the factories, round and round.

## VII.

" For all day the wheels are droning, turning ;  
Their wind comes in our faces,  
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,  
And the walls turn in their places :

Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,  
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,  
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling  
All are turning, all the day, and we with all  
And all day the iron wheels are droning,  
And sometimes we could play,  
'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad moaning),  
'Stop ! be silent for to-day ! ' "

## VIII.

Ay, be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing  
For a moment, mouth to mouth !  
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing  
Of their tender human youth !  
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals :  
Let them prove their living souls against the notion  
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels !  
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark ;  
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,  
Spin on blindly in the dark.

## IX.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,  
To look up to Him and pray ;

So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,  
    Will bless them another day.  
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,  
    While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?  
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us  
    Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word  
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)  
    Strangers speaking at the door :  
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,  
    Hears our weeping any more?

## X.

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,  
    And at midnight's hour of harm,  
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,  
    We say softly for a charm.\*  
We know no other words except 'Our Father,'  
    And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,  
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,  
    And hold both within His right hand which is strong

\* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr Horne's report of his Commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity  
—1844.

ur Father ! ' If He heard us, He would surely  
 (For they call Him good and mild)  
 swer, smiling down the steep world very purely,  
 ' Come and rest with me, my child.'

## XI.

But, no ! " say the children, weeping faster,  
 " He is speechless as a stone :  
 d they tell us, of His image is the master  
 Who commands us to work on.  
 to ! " say the children,—“ up in Heaven,  
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.  
 not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving :  
 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.”  
 you hear the children weeping and disproving,  
 O my brothers, what ye preach ?  
 r God's possible is taught by His world's loving,  
 And the children doubt of each.

## XII.

d well may the children weep before you !  
 They are weary ere they run ;  
 ey have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory  
 Which is brighter than the sun.  
 ey know the grief of man, without its wisdom,  
 They sink in man's despair, without its calm ;

Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,  
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm ·  
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly  
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—  
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.  
Let them weep ! let them weep !

## XIII.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their look is dread to see,  
For they mind you of their angels in high places,  
With eyes turned on Deity.  
“How long,” they say, “how long, O cruel nation,  
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child’s heart,—  
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitantion,  
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?  
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,  
And your purple shows your path !  
But the child’s sob in the silence curses deeper  
Than the strong man in his wrath.”

*A CHILD ASLEEP.*

## I

How he sleepeth, having drunken  
 Weary childhood's mandragore !  
 From its pretty eyes have sunken  
 Pleasures to make room for more ;  
 Near the withered nosegay which he pulled the  
 day before.

## II.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking ;  
 Throw them earthward where they grew ;  
 Dim are such beside the breaking  
 Amaranths he looks unto :  
 eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do

## III.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden  
 From the palms they sprang beneath,  
 Now perhaps divinely holden,

Swing against him in a wreath :  
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and  
of his breath.

## IV.

Vision unto vision calleth  
While the young child dreameth on :  
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth  
With the glory thou hast won !  
Darker wast thou in the garden yestermorn by summer sun.

## V.

We should see the spirits ringing  
Round thee, were the clouds away :  
'T is the child-heart draws them, singing  
In the silent-seeming clay—  
Singing ! stars that seem the mutest go in music all the way.

## VI.

As the moths around a taper,  
As the bees around a rose,  
As the gnats around a vapour,  
So the spirits group and close  
Round about a holy childhood as if drinking its repose.

## VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,  
Flash their diadems of youth  
On the ringlets which half screen thee,  
While thou smilest . . . not in sooth  
*Thy* smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some ethereal  
mouth.

## VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,  
During slumber, shade by shade  
To fine down this childish beauty  
To the thing it must be made  
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see  
it fade.

## IX.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !  
Now he lieth dead and dumb ;  
Now he hears the angels' voices  
Folding silence in the room  
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words  
as they come.



## X.

Speak not ' he is consecrated ;  
Breathe no breath across his eyes :  
Lifted up and separated  
On the hand of God he lies  
In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral sanctities.

## XI

Could ye bless him, father—mother,  
Bless the dimple in his cheek ?  
Dare ye look at one another  
And the benediction speak ?  
Would ye not break out in weeping and confess yourselves too weak ?

## XII

He is harmless, ye are sinful ;  
Ye are troubled, he at ease ;  
From his slumber virtue winful  
Floweth outward with increase.  
Dare not bless him ' but be blessed by his peace, and go  
in peace.

*THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.*

## I.

WHEN ye stood up in the house  
 With your little childish feet,  
 And, in touching Life's first shows,  
 First the touch of Love did meet,—  
 Love and Nearness seeming one,  
 By the heartlight cast before,  
 And of all Beloveds, none  
 Standing farther than the door ;  
 Not a name being dear to thought,  
 With its owner beyond call ;  
 Not a face, unless it brought  
 Its own shadow to the wall ;  
 When the worst recorded change  
 Was of apple dropt from bough,  
 When love's sorrow seemed more strange  
 Than love's treason can seem now,—  
 Then, the Loving took you up  
 Soft, upon their eldci knees,

Telling why the statues droop  
Underneath the churchyard trees,  
And how ye must lie beneath them  
Through the winters long and deep,  
Till the last trump overbreathe them,  
And ye smile out of your sleep.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said  
A tale of fairy ships  
With a swan-wing for a sail ;  
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips  
For the merry merry tale—  
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead !

## II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories  
Of the men of long ago,  
Of the pale bewildering glories  
Shining farther than we know ;  
Of the heroes with the laurel,  
Of the poets with the bay,  
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel  
For that beauteous Helena ;  
How Achilles at the portal  
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,  
And his strong heart, half-immortal,  
Met the *kenta* with a cry ;

How Ulysses left the sunlight  
For the pale eidola race  
Blank and passive through the dun light,  
Staring blindly in his face ,  
How that true wife said to Poetus,  
With calm smile and wounded heart,  
“Sweet, it hurts not !” How Admetus  
Saw his blessed one depart ,  
How King Arthur proved his mission,  
And Sir Roland wound his horn,  
And at Sangreal’s moony vision  
Swords did bristle round like corn.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye read,  
That this Death, then, must be found  
A Valhalla for the crowned,  
The heroic who prevail .  
None, be sure can enter in  
Far below a paladin  
Of a noble noble tale—  
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead !

## III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,  
As a child that wakes at night  
From a dream of sisters speaking  
In a garden’s summer-light,—

That wakes, starting up and bounding,  
In a lonely lonely bed,  
With a wall of darkness round him,  
Stifling black about his head !  
And the full sense of your mortal  
Rushed upon you deep and loud,  
And ye heard the thunder hurtle  
From the silence of the cloud.  
Funeral-torches at your gateway  
Threw a dreadful light within.  
All things changed · you rose up straightway,  
And saluted Death and Sin.  
Since, your outward man has rallied,  
And your eye and voice grown bold ;  
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,  
With her saddest secret told.  
Happy places have grown holy  
If ye went where once ye went,  
Only tears would fall down slowly,  
As at solemn sacrament.  
Merry books, once read for pastime,  
If ye dared to read again,  
Only memories of the last time  
Would swim darkly up the brain  
Household names, which used to flutter  
Through your laughter unawares,—

God's Divinest ye could utter  
With less trembling in your prayers  
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye  
tread  
On your own hearts in the path  
Ye are called to in His wrath,  
And your prayers go up in wail  
—"Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,  
O Thou agonized on cross ?  
Art thou reading all its tale ?"  
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead !

## IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepst,  
And the drops will slacken so  
Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest  
With a quicker count will go.  
Think : the shadow on the dial  
For the nature most undone,  
Marks the passing of the trial,  
Proves the presence of the sun.  
Look, look up, in starry passion,  
To the throne above the spheres :  
Learn . the spirit's gravitation  
Still must differ from the tear's

Hope with all the strength thou usest

In embracing thy despair

Love · the earthly love thou lovest

Shall return to thee more fair.

Work make clear the forest-tangles

Of the wildest stranger-land

Trust the blessèd deathly angels

Whisper, "Sabbath hours at hand !"

By the heart's wound when most gory,

By the longest agony,

Smile ! Behold in sudden glory

The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee* !

And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,

"My Belovèd, is it so ?

Have ye tasted of my woe ?

Of my Heaven ye shall not fail !"

He stands brightly where the shade is,

With the keys of Death and Hades,

And there, ends the mournful tale—

So hopefully ye think upon the Dead !

*NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.*

## NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,  
 With a somewhat paler brow  
 Than she giveth to the ocean?  
 He, without a pulse or motion,  
 Muttering low before her stands,  
 Lifting his invoking hands  
 Like a seer before a sprite,  
 To catch her oracles of light :  
 But thy soul out-trembles now  
 Many pulses on thy brow.  
 Where be all thy laughs clear,  
 Others laughed alone to hear?  
 Where thy quaint jests, said for fame?  
 Where thy dances, mixed with game?  
 Where thy festive companies,  
 Moonèd o'er with ladies' eyes  
 All more bright for thee, I trow?  
 'Neath my moon what doest thou?



## THE MERRY MAN.

I am digging my warm heart  
Till I find its coldest part ;  
I am digging wide and low,  
Further than a spade will go,  
Till that, when the pit is deep  
And large enough, I there may heap  
All my present pain and past  
Joy, dead things that look aghast  
By the daylight now 't is done.  
Throw them in, by one and one !  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden  
Treasures which my hands have holden,  
Till the chillness made them ache ,  
Of childhood's hopes that used to wake  
If birds were in a singing strain,  
And for less cause, sleep again ;  
Of the moss-seat in the wood  
Where I trysted solitude ,  
Of the hill-top where the wind

Used to follow me behind,  
Then in sudden rush to blind  
Both my glad eyes with my hair,  
Taken gladly in the snare ;  
Of the climbing up the rocks,  
Of the playing 'neath the oaks  
Which retain beneath them now  
Only shadow of the bough ;  
Of the lying on the grass  
While the clouds did overpass,  
Only they, so lightly driven,  
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven ;  
Of the little prayers serene,  
Murmuring of earth and sin ;  
Of large-leaved philosophy  
Leaning from my childish knee ;  
Of poetic book sublime,  
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,  
Greek or English, ere I knew  
Life was not a poem too :—  
Throw them in, by one and one !  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

—Of the glorious ambitions  
Yet unquenched by their fruitions

Of the reading out the nights ;  
Of the straining at mad heights ;  
Of achievements, less descried  
By a dear few than magnified ,  
Of praises from the many earned  
When praise from love was undiscerned ;  
Of the sweet reflecting gladness  
Softened by itself to sadness :—  
Throw them in, by one and one !  
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these ? more, more than these !  
Throw in dearer memories !—  
Of voices whereof but to speak  
Makes mine own all sunk and weak ,  
Of smiles the thought of which is sweeping  
All my soul to floods of weeping ,  
Of looks whose absence fain would weigh  
My looks to the ground for aye ;  
Of clasping hands—ah me, I wring  
Mine, and in a tremble fling  
Downward, downward all this paining !  
Partings with the sting remaining,  
Meetings with a deeper throe  
Since the joy is ruined so,

Changes with a fiery burning,  
(Shadows upon all the turning,)  
Thoughts of . . . with a storm they came,  
*Them* I have not breath to name :  
Downward, downward be they cast  
In the pit ! and now at last  
My work beneath the moon is done,  
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover  
All my treasures darkly over :  
I will speak not in thine ears,  
Only tell my beaded tears  
Silently, most silently  
When the last is calmly told,  
Let that same moist rosary  
With the rest sepulchred be,  
Finished now ! The darksome mould  
Sealeth up the darksome pit.  
I will lay no stone on it,  
Grasses I will sow instead,  
Fit for Queen Titania's tread ,  
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,  
And *at at* written upon none ;  
Thus, whenever saileth by  
The Lady World of dainty eye,

Not a grief shall here remain,  
Silken shoon to damp or stain :  
And while she lisps, "I have not seen  
Any place more smooth and clean" . . .  
Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who  
Laughs as loud as I can do ?

## *EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.*

### I.

THE Earth is old ;  
 Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold ;  
 The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.  
 She saith, “ ‘Las me !    God’s word that I was ‘good’  
       Is taken back to heaven,  
 From whence when any sound comes, I am riven  
 By some sharp bolt ; and now no angel would  
 Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,  
 To glorify the lovely river fountains  
       That gush along their side :  
 I see—O weary change !—I see instead  
       This human wrath and pride,  
 These thrones and tombs, judicial wrong and blood,  
 And bitter words are poured upon mine head—  
 ‘O Earth ! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,  
 A church for most remorseful melancholy ,  
 Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had  
 An Eden in thee, wert thou not so sad !’

Sweet children, I am old ' ye, every one,  
Do keep me from a portion of my sun.

Give praise in change for brightness '  
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness  
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,  
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising I

## II.

Whereupon a child began  
With spirit running up to man  
As by angels' shining ladder,  
(May he find no cloud above ')  
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder  
All his days than now,  
Sitting in the chestnut grove,  
With that joyous overflow  
Of smiling from his mouth o'er brow  
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze  
Leaning tricksy from the trees  
To part his golden hairs, had blown  
Into an hundred smiles that one.

## III

"O rare, rare Earth ' " he saith,  
"I will praise thee presently ;  
Not to-day ; I have no breath .  
I have hunted squirrels three—

Two ran down in the furzy hollow  
Where I could not see nor follow,  
One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,  
With a yellow nut and a mock at me  
    Presently it shall be done !  
When I see which way these two have run,  
When the mocking one at the filbert-top  
Shall leap a-down and beside me stop,  
    Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,  
Will I pause, having known thy worth,  
    To say all good of thee ! ”

## IV.

Next a lover,—with a dream  
’Neath his waking eyelids hidden,  
And a frequent sigh unbidden,  
And an idlesse all the day  
Beside a wandering stream,  
And a silence that is made  
Of a word he dares not say,—  
Shakes slow his pensive head :  
    “ Earth, Earth ! ” saith he,  
“ If spirits, like thy roses, grew  
On one stalk, and winds austere  
Could but only blow them near,  
    To share each other’s dew ;—



If, when summer rains agree  
 To beautify thy hills, I knew  
 Looking off them I might see  
     Some one very beauteous too,—  
     Then Earth," saith he,  
 "I would praise . . . nay, nay—not I

## v.

Will the pedant name her next?  
 Crabbèd with a crabbèd text  
 Sits he in his study nook,  
 With his elbow on a book,  
 And with stately crossèd knees,  
 And a wrinkle deeply thrud  
 Through his lowering brow,  
 Caused by making proofs enow  
 That Plato in "Parmenides"  
 Meant the same Spinoza did,—  
 Or, that an hundred of the groping  
 Like himself, had made one Homer,  
*Homeros* being a misnomer  
 What hath *he* to do with praise  
 Of Earth or aught? Whene'er the slop  
 Sunbeams through his window daze  
 His eyes off from the learned phrase,  
 Straightway he draws close the curtain

## EARTH AND HER PRAISERS

May abstraction keep him dumb !  
Were his lips to ope, 't is certain  
“ *Derivatum est* ” would come.

### VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale  
In a silence full of wail,  
Raising not his sunken head  
Because he wandered last that way  
With that one beneath the clay :  
Weeping not, because that one,  
The only one who would have said  
“ Cease to weep, beloved ! ” has gon  
Whence returneth comfort none.  
The silence breaketh suddenly,—  
“ Earth, I praise thee ! ” crieth he,  
“ Thou hast a grave for also *me*.”

### VII.

Ha, a poet ! know him by  
The ecstasy-dilated eye,  
Not uncharged with tears that ran  
Upward from his heart of man ;  
By the cheek, from hour to hour,  
Kindled bright or sunken wan  
With a sense of lonely power ;  
By the brow uplifted higher

Than others, for more low declining  
By the lip which words of fire  
Overboiling have burned white  
While they gave the nations light ·  
Ay, in every time and place  
Ye may know the poet's face  
By the shade or shining.

## VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,  
Spreading his impassioned hands.  
"O God's Earth!" he saith, "the sig  
From the Father-soul to mine  
Of all beauteous mysteries,  
Of all perfect images  
Which, divine in His divine,  
In my human only are  
Very excellent and fair!  
Think not, Earth, that I would raise  
Weary forehead in thy praise,  
(Weary, that I cannot go  
Farther from thy region low,)  
If were struck no richer meanings  
From thee than thyself. The leaning  
Of the close trees o'er the brim  
Of a sunshine-haunted stream

*EARTH AND HER PRAISERS*

Have a sound beneath their leaves,  
Not of wind, not of wind,  
Which the poet's voice achieves :  
The faint mountains, heaped behind,  
Have a falling on their tops,  
Not of dew, not of dew,  
Which the poet's fancy drops :  
Viewless things his eyes can view,  
Driftings of his dream do light  
All the skies by day and night,  
And the seas that deepest roll  
Carry murmurs of his soul.  
Earth, I praise thee ! praise thou *me !*  
God perfecteth his creation  
With this recipient poet-passion,  
And makes the beautiful to be.  
I praise thee, O beloved sign,  
From the God-soul unto mine !  
Praise me, that I cast on thee  
The cunning sweet interpretation,  
The help and glory and dilation  
Of mine immortality ! ”

IX.

There was silence. None did dare  
To use again the spoken air

Of that far-charming voice, or  
 A Christian resting on the hill  
 With a thoughtful smile subdued  
 (Seeming learnt in solitude)  
 Which a weeper might have won  
 Without new tears, did softly  
 And looked up unto heaven afar  
 While he praised the Earth—

I count the praises thou art won  
 By thy waves that move aloud  
 By thy hills against the cloud,  
 By thy valleys warm and green  
 By the copses' elms between,  
 By their birds which, like a storm  
 Scattered by a strong delight  
 Into fragments musical,  
 Stir and sing in every bush,  
 By thy silver founts that fall,  
 As if to entice the stars at night  
 To thine heart, by grass and rye  
 And little weeds the children play  
 Mistook for flowers!

—Oh, be  
 Art thou, Earth, albeit worse  
 Than in heaven is called good!

Good to us, that we may know  
Meekly from thy good to go ;  
While the holy, crying Blood  
Puts its music kind and low  
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,  
And thine ancient curse !

## X.

“ Praised be the mosses soft  
In thy forest pathways oft,  
And the thorns, which make us think  
Of the thornless river-brink  
Where the ransomed tread .  
Praised be thy sunny gleams,  
And the storm, that worketh dreams  
Of calm unfinished .  
Praised be thine active days,  
And thy night-time's solemn need,  
When in God's dear book we read  
*No night shall be therein*  
Praised be thy dwellings warm  
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,  
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,  
Pauseth oft the merry din,  
Save the babe's upon the arm  
Who croweth to the crackling wood :

Yea, and, better understood,  
Praisèd be thy dwellings cold,  
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,  
Where the bodies 'of the saints  
Separate from earthly taints  
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,  
Waiting for the trumpet's sound  
To free them into blessing ;—none  
Weeping more beneath the sun,  
Though dangerous words of human love  
Be graven very near, above.

## XI.

“Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,  
Even for the change that comes  
With a grief from thee to us ·  
For thy cradles and thy tombs,  
For the pleasant corn and wine  
And summer-heat , and also for  
The frost upon the sycamore  
And hail upon the vine !”

*THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.*

But see the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her babe to rest

MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!  
My flesh, my Lord !—what name? I do not know  
A name that seemeth not too high or low,  
Too far from me or heaven:  
My Jesus, *that* is best ! that word being given  
By the majestic angel whose command  
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,  
When I and all the earth appeared to stand  
In the great overflow  
Of light celestial from his wings and head.  
Sleep, sleep, my saving One !

II.

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed  
And speechless Being—art Thou come for saving?



The palm that grows beside our door is bowed ,  
 By treadings of the low wind from the south,  
 A restless shadow through the chamber waving .  
 Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun,  
 But Thou, with that close slumber on Thy mouth,  
 Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.  
 Art come for saving, O my weary One ?

## III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary  
 Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul  
     High dreams on fire with God ;  
 High songs that make the pathways where they roll  
 More bright than stars do theirs ; and visions new  
 Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode  
     Suffer this mother's kiss,  
     Best thing that earthly is,  
 To glide the music and the glory through,  
 Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings  
     Of any seraph wing.  
 Thus noiseless, thus   Sleep, sleep my dreaming One !

## IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run  
 Through *my* lips to mine heart, to all its shiftings  
 Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness

In a great calm I feel I could lie down  
As Moses did, and die,\*—and then live most.  
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,  
That stand with your peculiar light unlost,  
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,  
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware Ye throw  
No shade against the wall! How motionless  
Ye round me with your living statuary,  
While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,  
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,  
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear  
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,  
Though their external shining testifies  
To that beatitude within which were  
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun:  
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—  
I look on His I know  
My spirit which dilateth with the woe  
Of His mortality,  
May well contain your glory.  
Yea, drop your lids more low.  
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!  
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

\* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

## V

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem ;  
 The dumb kine from their fodder turning th  
     Softened their hornèd faces  
     To almost human gazes  
     Toward the newly Born :  
 The simple shepherds from the star-lit brook  
     Brought visionary looks,  
 As yet in their astonished heaving rung  
     The strange sweet angel-tongue :  
 The magi of the East, in sandals worn,  
     Knelt reverent, sweeping round,  
     With long pale beards, their gifts upon the  
     The incense, myrrh and gold  
 These baby hands were impotent to hold :  
 So let all earthlies and celestials wait  
     Upon Thy royal state  
     Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

## VI

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest  
 New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest  
 On mortal lips,—“I am not proud”—*not proud*  
 Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,  
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed

As others bow before Him, still mine heart  
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries  
That roll in vision your futurities

My future grave athwart,—  
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep  
Watch o'er this sleep,—  
Say of me as the Heavenly said—"Thou art  
The blesseddest of women!"—blessedest,  
Not holiest, not noblest, no high name  
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame  
When I sit meek in heaven!

For me, for me,  
God knows that I am feeble like the rest!  
I often wandered forth, more child than maiden  
Among the midnight hills of Galilee

Whose summits looked heaven-laden,  
Listening to silence as it seemed to be  
God's voice, so soft yet strong, so fain to press  
Upon my heart as heaven did on the height,  
And waken up its shadows by a light,  
And show its vileness by a holiness  
Then I knelt down most silent like the night,  
Too self-renounced for fears,  
Raising my small face to the boundless blue  
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears  
God heard *them* falling after, with His dew.

## VII.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see  
 This Incorruptible now born of me,  
 This fair new Innocence no sun did chance  
 To shine on, (for even Adam was no child,)  
 Created from my nature all defiled,  
 This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—  
 Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more  
 Than others do, or *I* did heretofore?  
 Can hands wherein such burden pure has been  
 Not open with the cry “unclean, unclean,”  
 More oft than any else beneath the skies?

Ah King, ah, Christ, ah son!  
 The kine, the shepherds, the abased wise  
     Must all less lowly wait  
     Than I, upon Thy state  
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

## VIII.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His univers  
 Come, crown me Him a King!  
 Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling  
     Their light where fell a curse,  
 And make a crowning for this kingly brow!—  
 What is my word? Each empyreal star

Sits in a sphere afar  
In shining ambuscade :  
The child-brow, crowned by none,  
Keeps its unchildlike shade.  
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One !

IX

Unchildlike shade ! No other babe doth wear  
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou  
No small babe-smiles my watching heart has seen  
To float like speech the speechless lips between,  
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,  
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood  
Alas, our earthly good  
In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee  
Yet, sleep, my weary One !

X.

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,  
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,  
Doth smite me inly, like a sword a sword ?  
*That* "smites the Shepherd." Then, I think aloud  
The words "despised,"—"rejected,"—every word  
Recoiling into darkness as I view  
The DARLING on my knee.

Bright angels,—move not—lest ye stir the cloud  
Betwixt my soul and His futurity !

I must not die, with mother's work to do,  
And could not live—and see.

XI.

It is enough to bear  
This image still and fair,  
This holier in sleep  
Than a saint at prayer,  
This aspect of a child  
Who never sinned or smiled ;  
This Presence in an infant's face ;  
This sadness most like love,  
This love than love more deep,  
This weakness like omnipotence  
It is so strong to move.

Awful is this watching place,  
Awful what I see from hence—  
A king, without regalia,  
A God, without the thunder,  
A child, without the heart for play ;  
Ay, a Creator, rent asunder  
From His first glory and cast away  
On His own world, for me alone  
To hold in hands created, crying—Son !

XII.

That tear fell not on Thee,  
Beloved, yet thou stirrest in thy slumber !  
THOU, stirring not for glad sounds out of number  
Which through the vibratory palm-trees run  
From summer-wind and bird,  
So quickly hast thou heard  
A tear fall silently ?  
Wak'st thou, O loving One?—



*AN ISLAND.*

All goeth but Goddis will.—OLD POET.

## I.

My dream is of an island-place  
Which distant seas keep lonely,  
A little island on whose face  
The stars are watchers only :  
Those bright still stars ! they need not seem  
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

## II.

An island full of hills and dells,  
All rumped and uneven  
With green recesses, sudden swells,  
And odorous valleys driven  
So deep and straight that always there  
The wind is cradled to soft air.

## III.

Hills running up to heaven for light  
Through woods that half-way ran,  
As if the wild earth mimicked right  
The wilder heart of man :  
Only it shall be greener far  
And gladder than hearts ever are.

## IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece  
Of Dante's paradise,  
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,  
In falling from the skies ;  
Bringing within it, all the roots  
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits .

## V.

For—saving where the grey rocks strike  
Their javelins up the azure,  
Or where deep fissures miser-like  
Hoard up some fountain treasure,  
(And e'en in them, stoop down and hear,  
Leaf sounds with water in your ear,—)

## VI.

The place is all awave with trees,  
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,  
Acacias having drunk the lees  
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,  
And wan grey olive-woods which seem  
The fittest foliage for a dream.

## VII.

Trees, trees on all sides ! they combine  
Their plummy shades to throw,  
Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine  
Whene'er the sun may go,  
The ground beneath he deeply stains,  
As passing through cathedral panes.

## VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours  
That shining from above her,  
When many Pleiades of flowers  
(Not one lost) star her over,  
The rays of their unnumbered hues  
Being all refracted by the dews.

## IX.

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink  
The Amreeta of the sky,  
Shut bells that dull with rapture sink,  
And lolling buds, half shy ,  
I cannot count them, but between  
Is room for grass and mosses green,

## X

And brooks, that glass in different strengths  
All colours in disorder,  
Or, gathering up their silver lengths  
Beside their winding border,  
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,  
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

## XI.

Nor think each archèd tree with each  
Too closely interlaces  
To admit of vistas out of reach,  
And broad moon-lighted places  
Upon whose sward the antlered deer  
May view their double image clear.

## XII.

For all this island 's creature-full,  
    (Kept happy not by halves)  
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pu  
    Then low back at their calves  
With tender lowings, to approve  
The warm mouths milking them for lo

## XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,  
    And harmless leaping leopards,  
And buffaloes upon the slopes,  
    And sheep unrul'd by shepherds :  
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mu  
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

## XIV

And birds that live there in a crowd,  
    Horned owls, rapt nightingales,  
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks  
    Self-sphered in those grand tails ,  
All creatures glad and safe, I deem  
No guns nor springes in my dream !

## XV.

The island's edges are a-wing  
With trees that overbranch  
The sea with song-birds welcoming  
The curlews to green change;  
And doves from half-closed lids espy  
The red and purple fish go by.

## XVI.

One dove is answering in trust  
The water every minute,  
Thinking so soft a murmur must  
Have her mate's cooing in it :  
So softly doth earth's beauty round  
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

## XVII

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder  
To meet the bounding waves ,  
Beside them straightway I repair,  
To live within the caves ·  
And near me two or three may dwell  
Whom dreams fantastic please as well

## XVIII

Long winding caverns, glittering far  
    Into a crystal distance !  
Through clefts of which shall many a star  
    Shine clear without resistance,  
And carry down its rays the smell  
Of flowers above invisible

## XIX.

I said that two or three might choose  
    Their dwelling near mine own  
Those who would change man's voice and use,  
    For Nature's way and tone—  
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,  
For Nature's steadfast sympathies

## XX.

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,  
    Shall play a faithful part ,  
Her beautiful shall ne'er address  
    The monstrous at our heart  
Her musical shall ever touch  
Something within us also such.

## XXI

Yet shall she not our mistress live,  
As doth the moon of ocean,  
Though gently as the moon she give  
Our thoughts a light and motion  
More like a harp of many lays,  
Moving its master while he plays.

## XXII.

No sod in all that island doth  
Yawn open for the dead ;  
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ,  
No earth, a mourner's tread ,  
We cannot say by stream or shade,  
“ I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed ”

## XXIII.

Our only “ farewell ” we shall laugh  
To shifting cloud or hour,  
And use our only epitaph  
To some bud turned a flower :  
Our only tears shall serve to prove  
Excess in pleasure or in love.



## XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch  
From fairest island-birds,  
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,  
Born singing ! then our words  
Unconsciously shall take the dyes  
Of those prodigious fantasies.

## XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth  
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach ;  
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth  
Shall glide into our speech :  
(What music, certes, can you find  
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

## XXVI.

And often, by the joy without  
And in us, overcome,  
We, through our musing, shall let float  
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—  
As Pindar might have writ if he  
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

## XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields  
He died in, longer knowing,  
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields  
Been lost in Meles flowing,  
Or Poet Plato, had the undim  
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

## XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,  
To make a place for prayer,  
And I will choose a praying voice  
To pour our spirits there:  
How silverly the echoes run!  
*Thy will be done,—thy will be done.*

## XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words!  
They lift me from my dream;  
The island fadeth with its swards  
That did no more than seem.  
The streams are dry, no sun could find—  
The fruits are fallen, without wind.

## XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will  
Our foolish wills undoeth !  
And yet what idle dream breaks ill,  
Which morning-light subdueth ?  
And who would murmur and misdoubt,  
When God's great sunrise finds him out ?

# THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ἦδη νοερούς  
Πέτασαι ταρσούς.

SYNESIUS.

## I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.  
The great humanity which beats  
Its life along the stony streets,  
Like a strong and unsunned river  
In a self-made course,  
I sit and hearken while it rolls.  
Very sad and very hoarse  
Certes is the flow of souls ;  
Infinitest tendencies  
By the finite prest and pent,  
In the finite, turbulent .  
How we tremble in surprise  
When sometimes, with an awful sound,  
God's great plummet strikes the ground !

## II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,  
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by,  
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—  
But it goes too fast for charity;  
The trail on the street of the poor man's broom,  
That the lady who walks to her palace-home,  
On her silken skirt may catch no dust;  
The tread of the business-men who must  
Count their per-cents by the paces they take;  
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother  
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the  
other

Laid yesterday where it will not wake;  
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks  
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day;  
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks  
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate;  
The cabman's cry to get out of the way;  
The dustman's call down the area-grate;  
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,  
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,  
The fight in the street which is backed for gold,  
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall;  
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff

As he trades in his own grief's sacredness,  
The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,  
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,  
(The grinder's face being nevertheless  
Dry and vacant of even woe  
While the children's hearts are leaping so  
At the merry music's winding,)  
The black-plumed funeral's creeping train,  
Long and slow (and yet they will go  
As fast as Life though it hurry and strain ')  
Creeping the populous houses through  
And nodding their plumes at either side,—  
At many a house, where an infant, new  
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried,—  
At many a house where sitteth a bride  
Trying to-morrow's coronals  
With a scarlet blush to-day:  
    Slowly creep the funerals,  
As none should hear the noise and say  
"The living, the living must go away  
    To multiply the dead "  
    Hark ! an upward shout is sent,  
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple  
    The bells ring out,  
The trumpets sound, the people shout,  
The young queen goes to her Parliament.

She turneth round her large blue eyes  
More bright with childish memories  
Than royal hopes, upon the people ;  
On either side she bows her head

Lowly, with a queenly grace  
And smile most trusting-innocent,  
As if she smiled upon her mother ;  
The thousands press before each other  
To bless her to her face ;  
And booms the deep majestic voice  
Through trump and drum,—“ May the queen rejoice  
In the people's liberties ! ”

## III.

I dwell amid the city,  
And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,  
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly :  
I hear the confluence and sum of each,  
And that is melancholy !  
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd city,  
The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity.

## IV.

O blue sky ! it mindeth me  
Of places where I used to see

Its vast unbroken circle thrown  
From the far pale-peakèd hill  
Out to the last veige of ocean,  
As by God's arm it were done  
Then for the first time, with the emotion  
Of that first impulse on it still  
Oh, we spiits fly at will  
Faster than the wingèd steed  
Whereof in old book we read,  
With the sunlight foaming back  
From his flanks to a misty wrack,  
And his nostril reddening proud  
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud,—  
Smoother than Sabrina's chair  
Gliding up from wave to air,  
While she smileth debonair  
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,  
Like her own mooned waters nightly,  
Through her dripping hair.

## v.

Very fast and smooth we fly,  
Spirits, though the flesh be by;  
All looks feed not from the eye  
Nor all hearings from the ear:



We can hearken and espy  
Without either, we can journey  
Bold and gay as knight to tourney,  
And, though we wear no visor down  
To dark our countenance, the foe  
Shall never chafe us as we go.

## VI.

I am gone from peopled town !  
It passeth its street-thunder round  
My body which yet hears no sound,  
For now another sound, another  
Vision, my soul's senses have—  
O'er a hundred valleys deep  
Where the hills' green shadows sleep  
Scarce known because the valley-trees  
Cross those upland images,  
O'er a hundred hills each other  
Watching to the western wave,  
I have travelled,—I have found  
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

## VII.

I have found a grassy niche  
Hollowed in a seaside hill,

As if the ocean-grandeur which  
Is aspectable from the place,  
Had struck the hill as with a mace  
Sudden and cleaving    You might fill  
That little nook with the little cloud  
Which sometimes lieth by the moon  
To beautify a night of June ;  
A cavelike nook which, opening all  
To the wide sea, is disallowed  
From its own earth's sweet pastoral :  
Cavelike, but roofless overhead  
And made of verdant banks instead  
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread  
Instead of spar and stalactite,  
Cowslips and daisies gold and white .  
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,  
You think the sea they look toward  
Doth serve them for another sky  
As warm and blue as that on high.

## VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,  
And when you shall have crept to it,  
Slipping down the banks too steep  
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,

Do not think—though at your feet  
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold  
The line where earth and ocean meet ;  
You sit too much above to view  
The solemn confluence of the two :  
You can hear them as they greet,  
You can hear that evermore  
Distance-softened noise more old  
Than Nereid's singing, the tide spent  
Joining soft issues with the shore  
In harmony of discontent,  
And when you hearken to the grave  
Lamenting of the underwave,  
You must believe in earth's communion  
Albeit you witness not the union.

## IX.

Except that sound, the place is full  
Of silences, which when you cull  
By any word, it thrills you so  
That presently you let them grow  
To meditation's fullest length  
Across your soul with a soul's strength  
And as they touch your soul, they borrow

Do not think—though at your feet  
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold  
The line where earth and ocean meet ;  
You sit too much above to view  
The solemn confluence of the two ·  
You can hear them as they greet,  
You can hear that evermore  
Distance-softened noise more old  
Than Nereid's singing, the tide spent  
Joining soft issues with the shore  
In harmony of discontent,  
And when you hearken to the grave  
Lamenting of the underwave,  
You must believe in earth's communion  
Albeit you witness not the union.

## IX.

Except that sound, the place is full  
Of silences, which when you cull  
By any word, it thrills you so  
That presently you let them grow  
To meditation's fullest length  
Across your soul with a soul's strength ·  
And as they touch your soul, they borrow

Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,  
That deathly odour which the clay  
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

## X.

Alway ! alway ? must this be ?  
Rapid Soul from city gone,  
Dost thou carry inwardly  
What doth make the city's moan ?  
Must this deep sigh of thine own  
Haunt thee with humanity ?  
Green visioned banks that are too steep  
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,  
May all sad thoughts adown you creep  
Without a shepherd ? Mighty sea,  
Can we dwarf thy magnitude  
And fit it to our straitest mood ?  
O fair, fair Nature, are we thus  
Impotent and querulous  
Among thy workings glorious,  
Wealth and sanctities, that still  
Leave us vacant and defiled  
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,  
Kissed soft against his will ?

## XI.

God, God !

With a child's voice I cry,

Weak, sad, confidingly—

God, God !

Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not always up  
Unto Thy love, (as none of ours are) droop

As ours, o'er many a tear ;

Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,  
Two little tears suffice to cover all :

Thou knowest, Thou who art so prodigal  
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer

Expiring in the woods, that care for none

Of those delightful flowers they die upon

## XII.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath  
We name our souls, self-spoilt !—by that strong passion  
Which paled Thee once with sighs, by that strong death  
Which made Thee once unbreathing—from the wrack  
Themselves have called around them, call them back,  
Back to Thee in continuous aspiration !

For here, O Lord,

For here they travel vainly, vainly pass

From city-pavement to untrodden sward

Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass  
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain  
The greatest speed of all these souls of men  
Unless they travel upward to the throne  
Where sittest THOU the satisfying ONE,  
With help for sins and holy perfectings  
For all requirements : while the archangel, raising  
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,  
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings.

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters of a Child.*

I

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,  
*Hadst* thou the second sight—  
 Upturning worship and delight  
 With such a loving duty  
 To his grand face, as women will,  
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still?

II.

—Before his shrine to doom thee,  
 Using the same child's smile  
 That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile  
 For the first time, won from thee  
 Ere star and flower grew dim and dead  
 Save at his feet and o'er his head?



## III.

—Digging thine heart and throwing  
Away its childhood's gold,  
That so its woman-depth might hold  
His spirit's overflowing?  
(For surging souls, no worlds can bound,  
Their channel in the heart have found.)

## IV.

O child, to change appointed,  
Thou hadst not second sight!  
What eyes the future view aright  
Unless by tears anointed?  
Yea, only tears themselves can show  
The burning ones that have to flow.

## V.

O woman, deeply loving,  
Thou hadst not second sight!  
The star is very high and bright,  
And none can see it moving.  
Love looks around, below, above,  
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

## VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing  
Sent onward o'er the sea,  
Thy dove of hope came back to thee  
Without a leaf: art laying  
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,  
Still in thy bosom secretly?

## VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,  
I have the second sight!  
The stone upon his grave is white,  
The funeral stone between ye;  
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed  
Some change as hardly understood.

## VIII.

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?  
The tears are in thine eyes  
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize  
Thy maidenhood of beauty  
In his own glory, which is smooth  
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

## IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,  
He breathes upon thy brow,  
He lifts thee upward in the glow  
Of his great genius round thee,—  
The childlike poet undefiled  
Preserving evermore THE CHILD

*MAN AND NATURE.*

A SAD man on a summer day  
Did look upon the earth and say—

“ Purple cloud the hill-top binding ,  
Folded hills the valleys wind in ;  
Valleys with fresh streams among you ;  
Streams with bosky trees along you ;  
Trees with many birds and blossoms ;  
Birds with music-trembling bosoms ,  
Blossoms dropping dew that wreathe you  
To your fellow flowers beneath you ,  
Flowers that constellate on earth ;  
Earth that shakest to the mirth  
Of the merry Titan Ocean,  
All his shining hair in motion !  
Why am I thus the only one  
Who can be dark beneath the sun ? ”

But when the summer day was past,  
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,

Self-answered so --

“Because, O cloud,  
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud  
Heavily on mountain top,—  
Hills that almost seem to drop  
Stricken with a misty death  
To the valleys underneath,—  
Valleys sighing with the torrent,—  
Waters streaked with branches horrent,—  
Branchless trees that shake your head  
Wildly o’er your blossoms spread  
Where the common flowers are found,—  
Flowers with foreheads to the ground,—  
Ground that shrieketh while the sea  
With his iron smiteth thee—  
I am, besides, the only one  
Who can be bright *without* the sun.”

*A SEA-SIDE WALK.*

## I.

WE walked beside the sea  
 After a day which perished silently  
 Of its own glory—like the princess weird  
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,  
 Uttered with burning breath, “Ho! victory!”  
 And sank adown, a heap of ashes pale:  
     So runs the Arab tale.

## II.

The sky above us showed  
 A universal and unmoving cloud  
 On which the cliffs permitted us to see  
 Only the outline of their majesty,  
 As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd:  
 And shining with a gloom, the water grey  
     Swang in its moon-taught way.

## III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out ;  
They did not dare to tread so soon about,  
Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun :  
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one  
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,  
And silence's impassioned breathings round  
Seemed wandering into sound

## IV.

O solemn-beating heart  
Of nature ! I have knowledge that thou art  
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever ;  
And, what time they are slackened by him ever,  
So to attest his own supernal part,  
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong  
The slackened coid along :

## V.

For though we never spoke  
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,  
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused  
Into the plaintive speaking that we used  
Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;  
And, had we seen each other's face, we had  
Seen haply each was sad.

# *THE SEA-MEW*

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.

## I.

How joyously the young sea-mew  
Lay dreaming on the waters blue  
Whereon our little bark had thrown  
A little shade, the only one,  
But shadows ever man pursue.

## II

Familiar with the waves and free  
As if their own white foam were he,  
His heart upon the heart of ocean  
Lay learning all its mystic motion,  
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

## III.

And such a brightness in his eye  
As if the ocean and the sky



Within him had lit up and nurst  
A soul God gave him not at first,  
To comprehend their majesty.

## IV

We were not cruel, yet did sunder  
His white wing from the blue waves under,  
And bound it, while his fearless eyes  
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,  
As deeming us some ocean wonder

## V.

We bore our ocean bird unto  
A grassy place where he might view  
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,  
The waving of the tall green trees,  
The falling of the silver dew

## VI

But flowers of earth were pale to him  
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;  
And when earth's dew around him lay  
He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,  
And his eye waxèd sad and dim.

## VII.

The green trees round him only made  
A prison with their darksome shade ,  
And drooped his wing, and mournèd he  
For his own boundless glittering sea—  
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

## VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,  
Her gentle voice's murmuring,  
In ocean's stead his heart to move  
And teach him what was human love :  
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

## IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,  
(First looking to the sea-like sky  
That hath no waves) because, alas !  
Our human touch did on him pass,  
And, with our touch, our agony.

*FELICIA HEMANS*

TO L. E. L.,

REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE POETESS

## I.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned  
     Dead art bowing,  
 And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow  
     throwing,  
 And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music  
     wedding,  
 And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of their  
     shedding !—

## II.

Take music from the silent Dead whose meaning is  
     completer,  
 Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such tears  
     are meet,er,  
 And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou  
     treadest,  
 No flowers for her ! no need of flowers, albeit “bring  
     flowers !” thou saidest.

## III

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may  
    come to breaking,  
Or flowers, to greet the "bride"—the heart's own beating  
    works its aching ;  
Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's  
    free bosom gathered,  
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it  
    withered

## IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human  
    seeming,  
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming  
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,  
Her spherèd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more  
    bright and holy.

## V

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was  
    mourning  
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the  
    burning?  
The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod, for  
    the afflated  
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone  
    dilated?

## VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her  
brow was wreathing,  
But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in  
all her breathing,  
Which drew, from rocky earth and man, abstractions high  
and moving,  
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving

## VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Saviour she  
descrieth,  
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His  
bosom lieth:  
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments,  
flowing,  
There learneth she the sweet "new song" she will not  
mourn in knowing

## VIII

Be happy, crowned and living One! and as thy dust  
decayeth  
May thine own England say for thee what now for Her  
it sayeth—  
"Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,  
The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her singing."

## *L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.*

“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

*(From her poem written during the voyage to )*

### I.

“Do you think of me as I think of you,  
My friends, my friends?”—She said it from the  
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,  
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew  
Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the  
To reach across the waves friends left behind  
“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

### II.

It seemed not much to ask—“as *I* of *you*?”  
We all do ask the same; no eyelids cover  
Within the meekest eyes that question over:  
And little in the world the Loving do  
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for  
The echo of their own love evermore—  
“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

## III.

Love-learnèd she had sung of love and love,—  
And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head  
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,  
Whatever household noises round him move,  
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—  
Even so suggestive to her inward sense,  
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

## IV.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,  
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries  
Were broken in her visionary eyes  
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—  
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,  
She asked not,—“Do you praise me, O my land?”  
But,—“Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?”

## V.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year  
Love's silver phrase for England, smooth and well.  
Would God her heart's more inward oracle  
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!  
For when her questioned friends in agony  
Made passionate response, “We think of thee,”  
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

## VI.

Could she not wait to catch their answering  
 Was she content, content with ocean's sound  
 Which dashed its mocking infinite around  
 One thirsty for a little love?—beneath  
 Those stars content, where last her song had  
 They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon  
 Their singer was to be, in darksome death?

## VII.

Bring your vain answers—cry, “We think of  
 How think ye of her? warm in long ago  
 Delights? or crowned with budding bays?  
 None smile and none are crowned where lie  
 With all her visions unfulfilled save one,  
 Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun  
 And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

## VIII.

“Do ye think of me as I think of you?”—  
 O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood  
 Of all the world! what are we that we should  
 For covenants of long affection sue?  
 Why press so near each other when the touch  
 Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too  
 Is this “Think of me as I think of you.”

\* Her lyric on the Polar Star came home with her latest



## IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew  
A sigh to mortal issues, verily  
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,  
A vocal pathos rolls, and HE who drew  
All life from dust, and for all tasted death,  
By death and life and love appealing, saith  
*Do you think of me as I think of you?*

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME

PRINTED BY

SPOTTISWOODE AND CO, NEW-STREET SQUARE  
LONDON